Transfusion errors on the wards

What can be done to prevent them?

Presented by
Rebecca Gerrard
Transfusion Liaison Nurse - Northwest
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Transfusion errors on the wards

• What is the scale of the problem?
• Why is there a problem?
• How can transfusion incidents be prevented?
What is the scale of the problem?

- IBCT continues to be the largest category
- 25% increase in the number of IBCT reports this year
- IBCT makes up 75% of all reports received
- 70% of errors occur in clinical areas
- most common site of failure continues to be failure of the bedside check (156/588)
Distribution of errors according to the main reporting categories in IBCT: 588 errors from 348 reports

- Prescription, sampling, request (161) - 27%
- Blood Centre (10) - 2%
- Hospital Blood Bank (183) - 31%
- Collection, administration (232) - 40%
- Other (2) * - 0%

* Other = errors in software made by IT department
Errors in prescription, requesting of blood components and patient sampling

• 161 errors in these areas
  – in 44% cases primary error occurred here
  – half the cases related to failure to indicate special transfusion requirements
  – majority of these involved a patient at risk of TA-GVHD
Errors in collection and administration

• 232 errors in 187 cases
  – in 36% of reported cases the primary error occurred at this stage
  – 37% (65/176 cases with the time recorded) took place between 8pm and 8am, 33 started between MN and 8am of which 16 were said to be routine
  – 156 cases of failure of the bedside check
  – in 21 cases this was the primary error resulting in wrong transfusions being given
Errors in collection and administration

- in 45 cases the wrong blood component was collected from the fridge and the error not detected at the bedside. 10 of these cases related to acutely bleeding patients undergoing urgent or massive transfusions in critical care situations.
- in 135 cases the bedside check failed to detect an error earlier in the transfusion chain, in 24 of these cases an expired unit was transfused.
Categories and proportions of ‘near miss’ events

- Sample errors (542)
- Request errors (81)
- Laboratory sample handling &/or testing errors (86)
- Laboratory component selection, handling, storage & issue errors (97)
- Component collection, transportation, ward handling & administration errors (100)
Right blood to right patient

• 29 cases where the patient receives entirely appropriate blood which was intended for them but which, nevertheless, had some element in the process which was wrong and which could, under different circumstances, have led to a serious transfusion error
Why is there a problem?

• Blood transfusion is a complex multi-stage process
• False sense of security?
• Guidelines not always practical and may differ from tradition
• Lack of understanding that blood should be treated like a drug
• Record keeping is poor
Why is there a problem?
Site of transfusion where error occurred in a clinical area

- Ward (62.9%)
- Theatre, including recovery (10.7%)
- Out Patients / Day Unit (10.1%)
- ICU (9.9%)
- A & E (4.9%)
- Other * (1.4%)
Ward issues

• Nursing shortages and staffing issues
• Dependency of patients
• Pressure on beds - transfusions at night
• High stress levels - mistakes made
• Areas where high nurse:patient ratios not exempt from error - problems confirming patient identity
'Ridiculous' new rules are confusing surgeons and putting lives at risk, say critics

Chaos on wards as hospitals remove patients' names over data protection fears

HOSPITALS are removing patients' names and medical records from their bedsides because of fears they might be breaching the Data Protection Act.

NHS managers – frantic to ensure they stick to confusing confidentiality laws – have replaced the names with letters identifying different beds and removed medical notes.

But last night critics claimed the new working practices are confusing doctors, placing an extra burden on nursing staff and could put patients at risk of receiving the wrong treatment.

Joyce Robinson, of health watchdog Patern Concern, said:

"Patients could get the wrong drugs"

"Chaos is built into the system. Nurses could fail patients because they no longer know about their beds and were warned as much," she said.

"It's just ridiculous – it can be very confusing and people could receive the wrong drugs or treatment. I would say a patient around the bed is confidentially straightforward but it's all got out of hand.

"It's against the safety of patients and not exactly welcoming if nurses or the person in the next bed doesn't know who the patient is.

"Last night officials at the Department of Health denied handing patients' names from wards, saying the decision was up to individual NHS trusts.

But confusion over data protection legislation, blamed for allowing serial killer Ian Huntley to evade justice for so long, is causing chaos in some hospitals, which claim they are following national guidance.

Senior staff at Kettering General complain the turnover of patients is so frequent that ward nurses have little time to know their individual charges.

One nurse said: "Not using the name boards makes the job harder because you can't have this easy contact with patients by automatically using their names.

"Of course, the names are on the board by the nurses' station, but it's a "A", "B", "C" bed which is somewhat impersonal, but using them is an exception. It is becoming common sense now.

"Inconsistencies in the Northamptonshire Hospital mean some wards still use the traditional name boards.

One patient, recovering from a knee operation, told The Mail on Sunday: 'It's only a small thing but when they keep on moving your bed around it's nice to know who you are being told about by their name.'

Liberal Democrat health spokesman Andrew Rees said: "We seem to have a cottage industry in this country around data protection.

"It is getting in the way of good service and being able to respond quickly to people's needs.

"This example sounds like the classic jokeworth – that is "I'm not putting a name above a bed because it's more than my job's worth.""

Kettering Hospital's director of nursing and midwifery Denise White insisted that the change was in line with Department of Health guidance.

"It has made our job much harder"

Health guidance. She said: "For security and confidentiality reasons, we generally don't put it on a name board. This is in line with national guidance and legal advice, so reassuring patient confidentiality.

"Before any treatment or medication, patients are identified by their wrist band and, when appropriate, verbally.

"But a Department of Health spokeswoman said: The decision on names is not something we would deal with, that is down to individual trusts."
How can transfusion incidents be prevented?

• National Initiatives:
  – Participation in SHOT must be active
    • in every hospital every serious transfusion adverse event must be identified, fully investigated and reported
    • requires involvement of all hospital staff to be aware of the risks and their responsibilities
    • identify and report weak links
‘Blame free’ culture

• ‘An Organisation with a memory’
  2000: Learning from adverse events in the NHS
• should encourage reporting in an open, learning and improving environment
• events to be fully analysed to determine root cause analysis
Root Cause Analysis (RCA)

- RCA is a structured investigation that aims to identify the true cause(s) of a problem, and the actions necessary to eliminate it (Anderson and Fagerhaug 2000)
- RCA takes a systems view of incidents – moving away from blaming individuals
- Look at what, how and why it happened
Resources

• Resources must be made available to ensure that appropriate and effective remedial action is taken following transfusion errors
  – financial
  – IT
  – audit
  – administrative support
Appropriate Use

- HSC 2002/09
- Better Blood Transfusion 2
- BBT2 Toolkit
Appropriate Use

- National Blood Conservation Strategy - 4 key initiatives
  - Education
  - Preparing patients for surgery
  - IoCS
  - Audit
National and Local Initiatives

- Electronic aids to transfusion safety should be assessed and developed at national level
  - DoH ‘Information for Health’ IT strategy
  - National standards and specifications
  - Positive patient identification
Clinical Audit

• Audit - monitor and improve practice
  – local audit
  – regional audit - organised by RTC’s
  – national audit e.g. National Comparative Audit
    • Audit of hospital policy on red cell transfusion
    • Audit of hospital transfusion practice
National Comparative Audit

• Action Plan:
  – regional seminars
  – blood awareness campaign with posters
  – re-audit practice
  – audit appropriate use of
  – blood
Hospital Transfusion Teams

- HTT’s must be established and supported
  - HSC 2002/09 BBT2
  - Consultant Haematologist, TP and BBM
  - SHOT a regular item on HTT and HTC agenda’s
  - networking/support - SPOT, User Groups and NBS
  Hospital Liaison Teams
Procedures and policies

- based on national guidelines
- simple and practical
- regularly reviewed
- readily available to clinical staff
- encourage ward staff to look at the clinical picture not just the ‘numbers’
Education and training

• Education and training to implement policies and procedures into practice
  – nurses, HCA’s, phlebotomists
  – BMS’s and Doctors at every level
  – tailored for specialist areas
  – Transfusion Practitioner’s
  – patients
Communication

- Communication at all levels e.g. re special requirements and between hospitals when patient care is shared
  - appropriate
  - timely
  - effective
Promoting SHOT in hospitals

- Increase nurse involvement with SHOT
- Raise awareness - more educational sessions on SHOT in Trusts, at HTC’s, in the North
- Make SHOT PowerPoint presentations available to all hospitals to use in training
- Have a SHOT poster available to hospitals for awareness days
Supporting SHOT

- Questionnaire survey to Transfusion Practitioners
- ‘Introduction to SHOT’ pack
- Regional Newsletter with SHOT articles
- Articles in general nursing journals as well as in more specialised publications such as ‘Blood Matters’
Case 37

- An ABO incompatible transfusion was given to a patient in ICU which resulted in major morbidity
  - Elective transfusion done ‘out-of-hours’
  - Porter had no documentation
  - Wrong unit collected and not correctly logged out
  - 2 nurses checked unit but not at the bedside
  - Blood held at room temperature for over 30 minutes
  - Observations not done and an acute reaction was not recognised until almost whole unit transfused
Thank You

Rebecca Gerrard
Tel: 0161 251 4328    Mobile: 07764 280 189
Email: rebecca.gerrard@nbs.nhs.uk