The Use of a Symptom Control Observation Chart on a Medicine For Elderly Ward

Greater Glasgow and Clyde

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Background

Dying patients have a varied, dynamic and often significant symptom burden and achieving symptom control of such symptoms is a fundamental aspect of palliative medicine^[1,2].

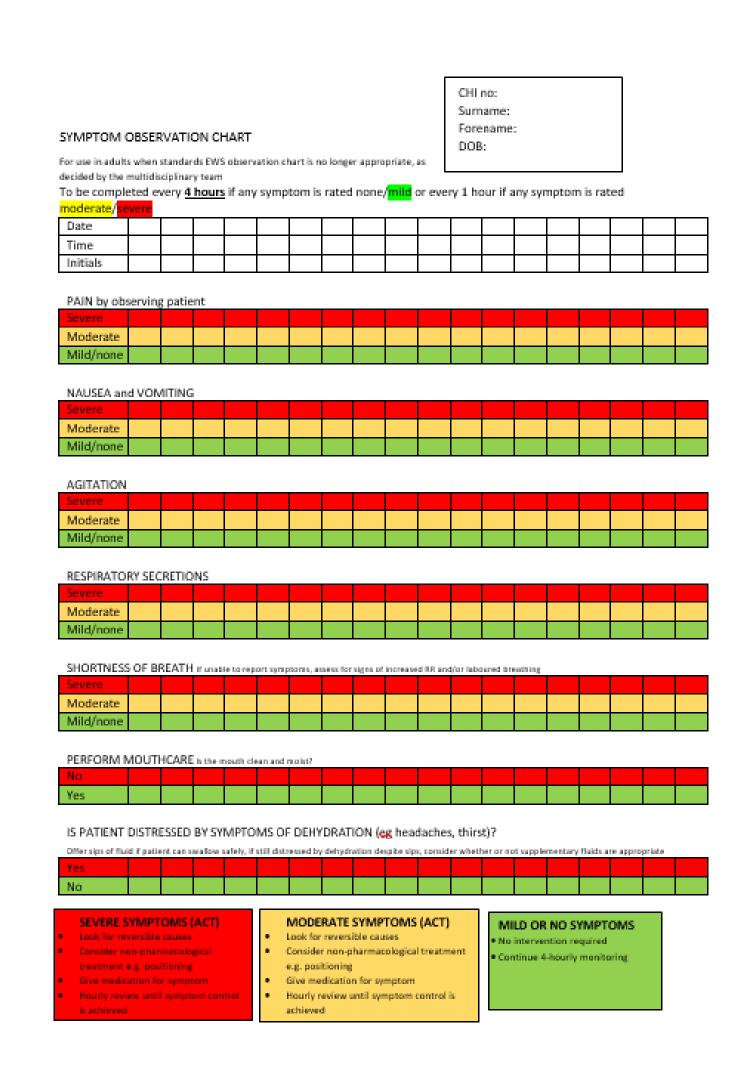
The decision to stop active treatment and focus solely on symptom control comes with the cessation of regular physical observations and therefore the use of a NEWS chart. Within Scotland, there is not a dedicated observation chart for the assessment and documentation symptoms associated with end of life. However, studies have shown that the use of such charts can improve patient care and relative satisfaction^[3]. Given this, a trial of a symptom control observation chart was carried out within a medicine for the elderly ward.

Aim

To trial and assess the role of a symptom control observation chart on a medicine for the elderly ward.

The chart

The chart is modelled on a traditional NEWS and previously trialled symptom control observation chart^[3]. It provides space for assessment of common symptoms of end of life and clinical advice for the individual completing the chart on suggested management based on symptom severity. The rear of the chart provides space for documentation of action taken.

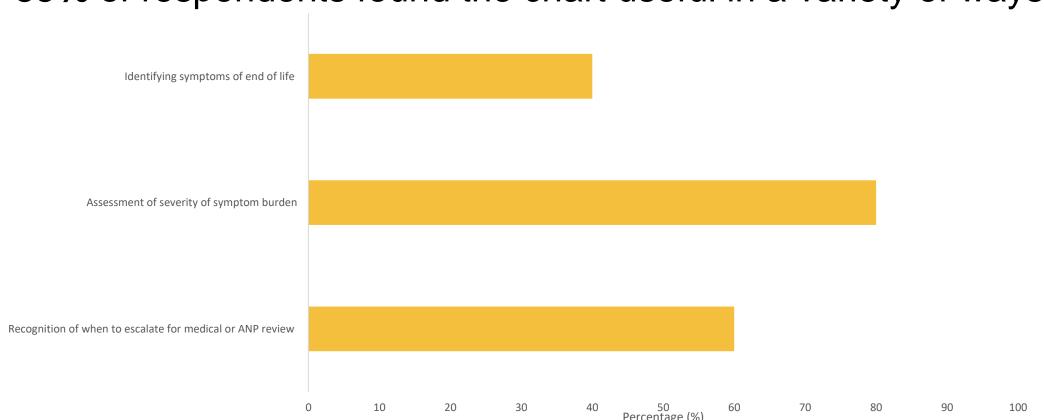


Staff Feedback

A baseline audit of nursing staff (20 responses) prior to introduction of the chart showed that 30% were confident in medical staff would always act on their concerns about patient symptoms, 75% felt that documentation of symptoms in nursing notes alone was adequate and that 90% supported trial of the chart .Following a year long trial of the chart, feedback was obtained via a online questionnaire. A total of 15 members of the MDT who had used the chart completed responses.

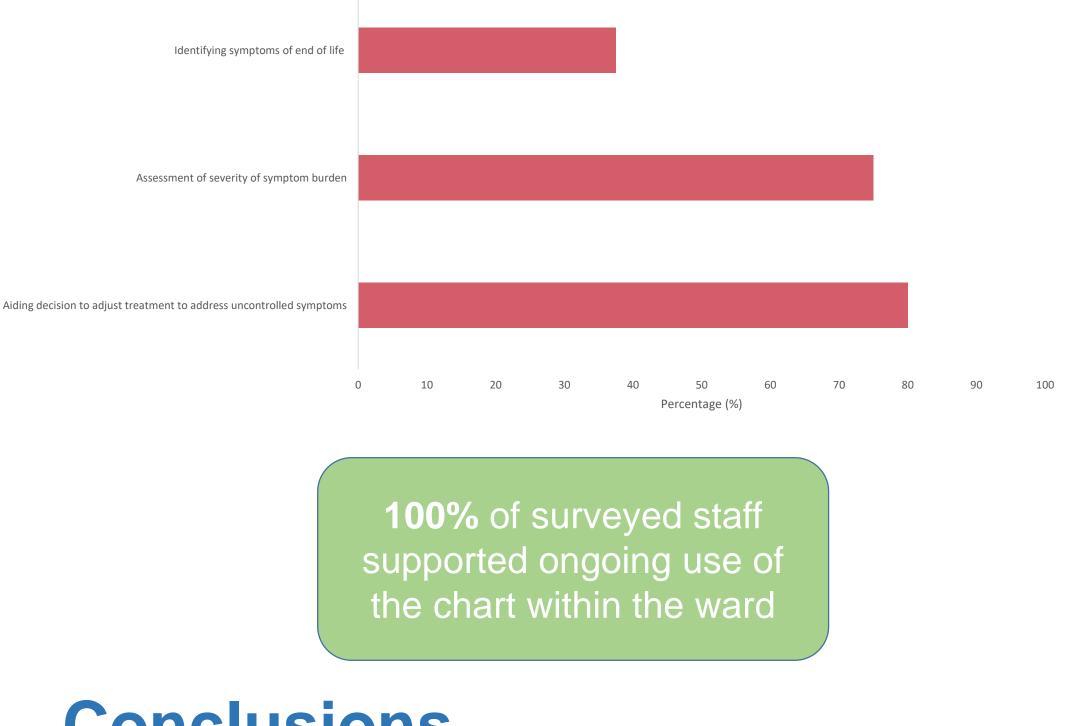
Nursing:

83% of respondents found the chart useful in a variety of ways:



Medical & ANP

88% of respondents found the chart useful in a variety of ways:



Conclusions

Within a medicine for the elderly ward, a symptom control observation chart has been shown to:

- Aid in the recognition & assessment of the symptoms of end of life for both nursing and medical staff
- Aid nursing staff in recognising when to escalate patients with uncontrolled symptoms for medical review
- Aid medical & ANP staff in recognising when treatments need to be adjusted in order to address uncontrolled symptoms

Future plans

The chart is to be trialled within other wards within the medicine for the elderly department following successful presentation at the departmental clinical governance meeting.