

Evaluating and Improving the Management of Tonsillitis in an A+E Department

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Abstract : Aims: Tonsillitis is one of the most common presentations to the A+E department. We aimed to assess whether patients presenting with tonsillitis are being managed in-line with current guidance. We then set out to educate A+E staff about tonsillitis management and then assessed for improvement in management. Methods: All patients presenting to A+E in one fortnight with a documented diagnosis of tonsillitis were included. We reviewed the notes to assess the choice of treatment in each case and whether a clinical score (CENTOR or FEVERPain score) was used to guide choice of treatment (in accordance with NICE guideline [NG84]). We designed and delivered an educational intervention for A+E staff covering tonsillitis guidelines. The audit was repeated two weeks later. Results: Over the study period, 49 patients were included; only 35% (n=17) had either a clinical score documented or had all components of a score recorded. In total, 39% (n=19) were treated with antibiotics. Of these, 63% (n=12) should not have been prescribed an antibiotic and 37% (n=7) were prescribed an inappropriate antibiotic. At re-audit, (n=50 cases), 58% (n=29) had a clinical score documented and 28% (n=14) were treated with antibiotics. Of these, 29% (n=4) should not have been prescribed antibiotics and 21% (n=3) were prescribed an inappropriate antibiotic. Thus, after this teaching session, there was a significant improvement in antibiotic prescribing practices (63% vs. 29%, p=0.026). Conclusions: A+E assessment and management of tonsillitis frequently deviated from guidelines, but a single teaching session vastly improved clinical scoring and antibiotic prescribing practices.

Keywords : tonsillitis, education, emergency medicine, ENT

Conference Title : ICEM 2021 : International Conference on Emergency Medicine

Conference Location : London, United Kingdom

Conference Dates : September 23-24, 2021