

Drowning: An Emergency Department Guideline

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Abstract : Overview: Drowning is an important cause of accidental death, particularly in children and young people. Although many survive drowning incidents, it is a relatively rare presenting complaint in Emergency Departments. When cases do present, they can be complex and unpredictable. For patients to receive the best care, it is important that their management is standardized and evidence based, however this can be difficult in a topic area with limited studies and inconsistencies in case reporting. Objectives: To review recent cases to assess the performance of Manchester Royal Infirmary Emergency Department in the management of near drowning. To produce evidence based guideline on the management of drowning victims in the ED. Methods: Emergency department records were searched for patients with the diagnosis of 'fatal drowning' or 'nearly drowning' and two relevant case notes reviewed. To produce the guideline a literature review was conducted and a series of structured short cut systematic reviews known as Best BETs carried out. This information was used to produce a clear treatment pathway. Results: The case studies emphasized the variety in presentation of drowning victims whilst highlighting inconsistencies in management and documentation. An evidence-based guideline is presented as a flowchart, which illustrates the relevant investigations and treatment that victims of a drowning incident should receive, based on the best available evidence. Conclusion: It is hoped that when put into practice, the guideline will improve and standardize patient care in cases of near drowning. An audit is recommended to assess its effectiveness.

Keywords : drowning, near drowning, non fatal drowning, fatal drowning

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