A PILOT STUDY VALIDATING THE USE OF A NEONATAL EARLY WARNING SCORE

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Background: A Neonatal Early Warning Score (NEWS) is currently not used consistently, and screening for sepsis can be a subjective decision. NEWS may help to alert clinicians as to which infants are sick or at risk of impending illness.

Aims: To demonstrate usefulness of NEWS signs and consequent actions in confirmed and suspected cases of neonatal sepsis.

Methods: A retrospective analysis of infants with either a positive blood culture or who received antibiotics with negative blood culture from July 2007 to June 2009. A 'traffic light' NEWS proforma was designed based on colour coded alert signs & symptoms according to severity. Data from the NEWS proforma was collated in Excel and analysed using simple statistical methods and percentage calculations.

Results: 15 case notes in the positive blood culture group were reviewed; 23 case notes in the antibiotic treatment group were reviewed. This gave a total of 38 case notes.

58% infants had one or more 'red alert' signs and were transferred to SCBU

47% infants had one or more 'amber alert' signs and had a senior review

39% infants had one or more 'green alert' signs and had a review within one hour

Some of the babies had more than 1 alert.

Conclusions: This NEWS would have highlighted all the infants with confirmed or suspected sepsis. Given the majority of junior trainees with relative inexperience it is helpful to have a validated proforma.