

Nurse-led telephone referral to paediatric emergency and assessment units

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Background: An increasing number of acute referrals have led to unsatisfactory working conditions and a degradation of the service to the families and their children attending paediatric emergency and assessment units. The usual way of referring for the general practitioner (GP) was by telephone to the resident assistant. This study investigated whether a nurse-led telephone referral system would optimize conditions for patients and staff.

Aim:

- To create optimal continuity of care
- Optimise service to GPs and other collaborators
- Improve quality of care to the families
- To improve working conditions in the paediatric emergency and assessment unit

Method: The project period was from October to December 2009. A team of five paediatric nurses were in charge of the nurse-led referral system with backup from the attending physician. Prior to the project the nurses were introduced to a flowchart on documentation of the referrals and a guideline to essential information about the child's condition. The guideline also included a model to ensure efficient and accurate reception and transmission of information-the ISBAR communication model. The project was evaluated using an electronic questionnaire and focus group interviews.

Findings: Nurse-led telephone referral helped to create:

- Optimal continuity of care as the nurses in charge of referral had a better overview
- Improved working procedures as information about the children were already documented prior to arrival to the PEAU
- Better working environment as staff was able to examine the children and talk to the families without interruptions
- An improved quality of the referral system according to the GPs

Conclusion: A nurse-led referral system to a PEAU has proven successful and staff reported improved working conditions. Furthermore, did the project shed a light on the importance of a validated triage tool to prioritize acutely admitted children? As a result of this the paediatric emergency and assessment unit commenced a project in order to develop a paediatric triage tool.

Biography

Claus Sixtus Jensen has completed Master of Health Science, Nursing in 2009 from Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia and is a Ph.D. student at Aarhus University in Denmark. He has been employed at the Paediatric Emergency and Assessment Unit at Department of Paediatrics at Aarhus University Hospital, Skejby in Denmark since 2001. His main interest is within acute paediatric care and has developed the first paediatric triage tool in Denmark and is focused in Paediatric Early Warning System in his Ph.D. study.

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