

Midwifery confidence in intrapartum epidural neurological monitoring: A survey and interventions

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Introduction

In 2019 31% of women had an epidural for labour[1]. In 2020, the Obstetric Anaesthetists' Association and the Association of Anaesthetists released a safety guideline on 'Neurological monitoring associated with obstetric neuraxial block[2]. This guidance suggests that motor and sensory block should be assessed hourly in labour epidurals. After initial placement and establishment, anaesthetists rely on midwives to monitor epidurals and contact them if concerned. As part of a multi stage quality improvement project we wanted to assess the training our midwives had received along with their perceived importance and confidence in checking both motor and sensory blockade.

Methods

We surveyed all midwives in the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board in November 2021, covering place of work, time since qualification, band, training received on motor and sensory monitoring, perceived importance of neurological monitoring, and confidence in motor and sensory assessment on a scale 1-10 (1 = not confident to 10 = very confident).

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Discussion

Despite a low return rate, we had a decent spread of responses across experience, banding and location of work.. Nearly all midwives felt under-confident in performing the recommended neurological monitoring in safe management of a labour epidural. This mirrors education; with up to 67% of midwifes having had no teaching in this area, and the rest only having had minimal teaching. Since our survey we are implementing multiple changes in our maternity unit, involving training for newly qualified midwives, including a lecture on epidural safety and monitoring. We are updating our intrapartum epidural monitoring chart, with prompting on observations, timing and safety implications of epidurals. We are also making an online learning resource for current midwives. We will re-survey after our changes have been fully implemented.

References

1. CQC- 2019 survey of women's experiences of maternity care Statistical release Published January 2020 Independent data analysis
2. Safety guideline: neurological monitoring associated with obstetric neuraxial block 2020- Anaesthesia 2020

Results



Chart 1 – respondents by experience

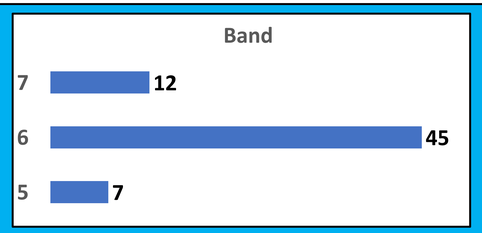


Chart 2 – respondents by band

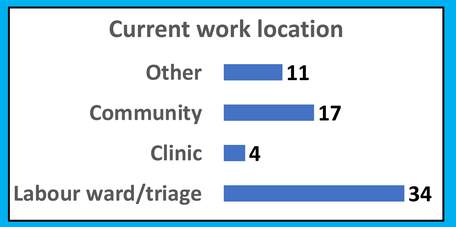


Chart 3 – respondents by Current work location

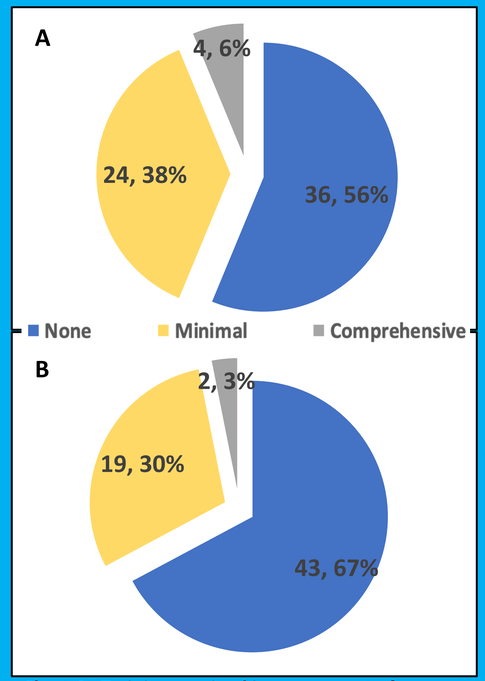
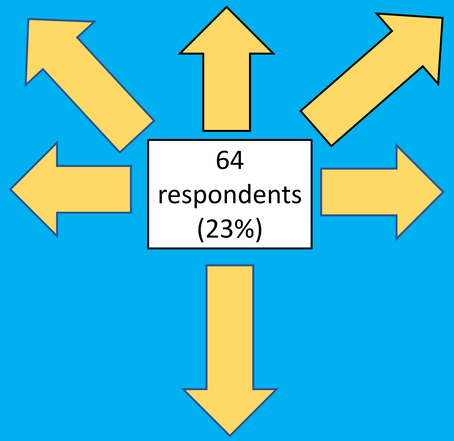


Chart 4 - Training received in assessment of sensory (A) and motor (B) block



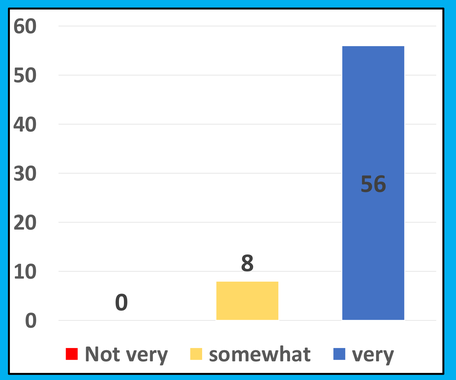


Chart 5 - Perceived importance of neurological monitoring

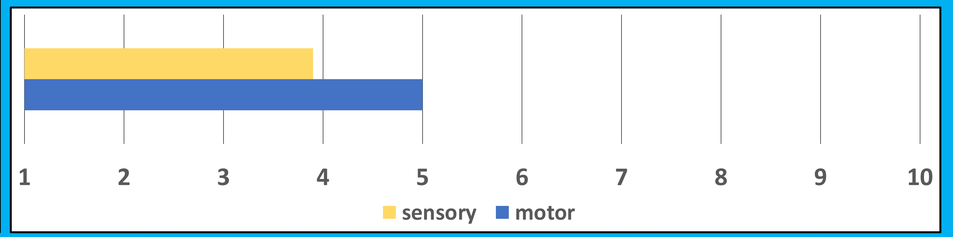


Chart 6 - Midwives confidence in testing sensory and motor block. (Scale 1-10, 1 – not confident to 10 very confident)