

‘BATT’ that epidural over...A survey to evaluate a new structured epidural handover tool within obstetric anaesthesia



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Background:

- A recent critical incident involving an incomplete handover of an epidural, contributed to a patient having a high epidural block and requiring assisted ventilation and ITU admission.
- National guidelines recommend a structured handover tool to be utilised during handovers^(1,2), but currently no epidural handover tools exist.
- Our department has devised the ‘BATT’ structured handover tool to aid safer handover of epidurals between anaesthetists. (see diagram).
- The 'BATT' handover tool was introduced by induction education and departmental emails to our obstetric anaesthetists.

Methods:

- An anonymised online survey was disseminated to all Nottingham obstetric anaesthetists.
- Questions explored included:
 - How familiar anaesthetists are with the handover tool?
 - Whether they had used it themselves?
 - Whether they had seen others use it whilst handing over epidurals?
 - What their thoughts are of the tool in assisting their handovers?

Results:

- A total of 26 responses were received, of which 10 participants were not aware of the tool.
- Many of the respondents who were aware of the tool found it useful (52%), with 20% of the responders stating it was not useful and 28% not giving a definitive answer. Of the benefits, they described that the tool:
 - **“answers important questions without prompting, that the incoming anaesthetist might have”**.
 - allows **“easy handover”** which **“includes salient points”** using a **“standardised method of handover”**.
 - Made **“people think about the epidurals”** and allowed **“review of epidurals”**.
- Of those who did not find it useful, they felt that it **was similar to their own handover routine**, or that it was a **bit of an “overkill”**.
- 16 anaesthetists had not used the tool before. Common reasons for why they had not used the tool were that:
 - They did not know about it
 - They did not see the benefit of using the tool
 - They were happy with their own handover format
 - They could not remember the tool acronym

Discussion:

- It is prominent from the free text that the 'BATT' tool was seen to help assist a complete yet focussed handover of labour epidurals.
- However, better education and dissemination of the tool may help embed new practice further, as many in the department still remained unaware of the tool. Multiple forms of education need to be considered when introducing such changes. These may include:
 - Consultant and Trainee Champions
 - Repeated Induction education
 - ‘BATT’ handover aids/posters at handover locations
 - Handover checklists
- A new guideline for the use of epidurals for operative interventions in obstetrics, and reformatting of the operative anaesthetic charts have now been introduced to embed this structure of epidural assessment and handover.
- A reaudit would therefore be informative, once the above changes have been fully incorporated into practice.

References:

1. Dharmadasa A, Dean M, Lucas DN, Rao K, Robinson PN. SAFE handovers in obstetric anaesthesia. International Journal of Obstetric Anesthesia. 2011 Apr 1; 20(2):192.
2. Chapter 9. Guidelines for the Provision of Anaesthesia services for an Obstetric population 2022. Published 21/2/22. Royal College of Anaesthetists.