Does protocol implementation decrease length of stay in patients of Diabetic Ketoacidosis (DKA)?

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**Background**

We found inconsistencies and room for error in communication in the care of pediatric patients in diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA). This intrigued us to look into other hospitals’ practices and into the evidence behind these practices.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to examine the effectiveness in a DKA protocol and, based off that evidence, to begin the process of enacting a DKA protocol on INOV A’s Pediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU).

**Methods**

We informally surveyed nurses on our unit to get a sense of what issues are important to them, especially pertaining to safety. A common concern was lack of a consistent DKA protocol on the PICU, so we formalized our survey process to understand the matter further. We also gathered information from Safety Always incidents filed over the past two years, which indicated issues with our current approach that led to delays in patient care.

Thirteen articles were reviewed and appraised. The overwhelming consensus in these articles pointed to the efficacy of a protocol.

- Koves IH, Leu MG, Spencer S, et al, found that a DKA protocol in a PICU significantly decreased length of stay, cerebral edema risk, risk of hypokalemia incidence, and lag time of insulin initiation by almost half pre vs post protocol.

- We reached out to contacts at hospitals around the country to learn about their pediatric DKA management processes and were able to collect six protocols.

**Findings**

Though nurses across the nursing experience gradient expressed comfort with caring for patients with DKA, our unit based survey revealed the need for a DKA protocol due to a reported lack of consistency in care for patients in DKA.

We also found overwhelming evidence supporting the use of a standardized protocol in decreasing length of stay along with decreasing secondary complications to diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA).

**Implications for Practice**

Our team presented our evidence at the PICU collaborative team meeting consisting of the PICU medical director, various PICU intensivists, PICU nursing director, and PICU nursing educator. The PICU medical director agreed with the need for a DKA protocol on the unit. We will be partnering with the PICU Medical Director to create a standardized protocol to be trialed in the INOV A PICU. Following a successful PICU implementation, the protocol will be shared with our Pediatric Emergency Department, as well as outside emergency departments who encounter such patients prior to their arrival in our PICU.

**References**


**Project Contact**

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**Acknowledgements**

We would like to acknowledge and thank our Clinical Director, Gail Green, and our Nurse Educator, Emily DeMarco, for their guidance and support with this project; our Medical Director, Keith Dockery, for his willingness to collaborate with new graduate nurses to bring about meaningful change to our unit; our facilitator, Alyssa Russell, for her help in bringing this project together; and the nurses on our units for taking the time to answer our informal and formal questions throughout this process.