From book to bedside: Evaluating how occupational therapists position the lower limb in acute care

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Background

Occupational Therapists (OT) in the RBWH acute care setting have an emerging role in positioning the lower limb of patients with complex clinical conditions that impact a person’s participation in valued life roles and activities. OTs are required to make evidence-based, cost-effective, and complex technical decisions to support patients with complex lower limb conditions. It is important to evaluate current practice via an audit of lower limb positioning against current evidence, translating knowledge from book to bedside to improve patient outcomes.

Aims

To measure compliance against current latest evidence, and to identify knowledge gaps and practice issues.

Methods

An Ethics Waiver was granted. A clinical audit tool was developed from clinical practice guidelines and current literature. Eligible encounters were those referred to OT for lower limb positioning across five RBWH acute areas over a one-month period. A retrospective clinical audit of electronic medical records was undertaken by two investigators. A staff experience survey was also administered comparing perceived against actual practice.

Results

Data was analysed descriptively. 29 retrospective clinical audit of electronic medical records was undertaken by two investigators. Compliance against audit criteria was calculated. No encounters were identified as fully compliant.

23 staff experience survey were administered comparing perceived against actual practice. Interestingly, majority of staff indicated agreement with positioning audit results, however this was not reflected in chart documentation. A risk matrix was used to systematically identify ten target criteria for practice change.

A Lower Limb Positioning Collaborative was formed to identify, establish and implement translation of latest evidence to practice. There will be a focus on upgrading training modules and resources.

Conclusion

In an emerging field of practice, it is pertinent for OTs to translate evidence-based practice into the clinical setting through methods such as clinical audits. This is the first audit of clinical practice in lower limb positioning at RBWH. The results will ensure knowledge translation from book to bedside now and into the future.

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