

Cellulitis education in primary care

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Introduction: Cellulitis is a skin infection that causes pain, malaise and poor quality of life, with a life-threatening risk of sepsis. It represents a significant burden to the NHS causing around 7,500 Emergency Department contacts and 37,200 bed days in a population of 3.2 million people. Similarly, annual primary care/general practitioner events captured for cellulitis are over 200,000. Research suggests that once you have one episode of cellulitis the recurrence rate ranges from 10-50% dependent on risk factors. Acute cellulitis management is often reactive and not focussed on risk factors. Misdiagnosis is up to 30%, with red leg syndrome, dermatitis or thrombophlebitis being treated unnecessarily with antibiotics. This education programme sits within the Cellulitis Improvement Programme.

Aims: • Capture data surrounding cellulitis education which could be replicated worldwide improving patient care; • Gain more understanding of the impact of cellulitis education sessions.

Method: Primary care practice managers emailed three times maximum, offering education, risk reducing information, access to media productions and leaflets and a direct referral pathway. Evaluation data captured via an anonymous google form.

Results: To date 387 primary care surgeries across Wales were contacted. Education has been delivered to 117 and is booked for 46 (response rate 42%). Results show that following the training 87% would rate their knowledge of cellulitis as good or excellent, 77% stated that they were likely or very likely to refer to the team. Significantly 48% said they were unaware that cellulitis rarely occurs bilaterally. Crucially 93% of respondents agreed the education session would change their practice with 50% diagnosing between 1–5 patients with cellulitis weekly. Since the introduction of the programme, 295 primary care patients have been referred to the team. Of those patients, 120 have completed the programme. This data shows:

- Average BMI of 32.4 with 61% having a BMI over 30
- 45% of the patients had lymphoedema with 80% unknown to a lymphoedema service
- 381 episodes of cellulitis (average of 3)
- 45 patients prescribed prophylactic antibiotics
- 10 patients prescribed rescue pack.

Providing up to date evidence on cellulitis is vital to change practice and reduce unnecessary antibiotic usage. As a result of the successful feedback, the roll out will continue across Wales and will include other health care professionals in both primary and secondary care.

Conclusion: Cellulitis education is definitely needed for general practice and this evaluation demonstrates the impact and how it could be replicated internationally.