Emergency Laparotomy

Embedding knowledge of quality improvement to improve the mortality of emergency abdominal surgery

Overview

Emergency laparotomy is a major surgical procedure, with 30,000 to 50,000 performed every year in the UK.

However, around 15% of patients are reported to die within 30 days of surgery. Over 25% of patients remain in hospital for more than 20 days after surgery, costing the NHS over £200 million a year.

Funded by the Health Foundation, the Emergency Laparotomy Collaborative was established in 2015 to use a quality improvement (QI) approach to tackle this. The Collaborative brings together 28 hospitals and 24 NHS trusts across three AHSN regions: Kent Surrey Sussex; Wessex; and West of England.

The Collaborative has worked to improve standards of care for patients undergoing emergency laparotomy surgery, reduce mortality rates, complications and hospital length of stay, while encouraging a culture of collaboration and embedding QI skills to ensure sustainability of change.

Results / impacts

Initial results show that the roll-out of the care bundle across 28 hospitals successfully reduced average length of stay by 1.3 days and reduced crude in-hospital 30-day mortality rate by 11% when comparing baseline period with improvement period.

In Kent Surrey and Sussex alone, we estimate that 79 lives were saved during the 24-month programme.

A health economics analysis suggests every £1 spent will result in approximately £4.50 benefit to the wider health and social economy.

The AHSN’s role

Kent Surrey Sussex AHSN is working in partnership with the National Emergency Laparotomy Audit (NELA) team to support regional teams with the implementation of an Emergency Laparotomy care bundle, through providing QI support and training as well as tailored data analytics.

Adoption and spread

This has involved the spread and adoption of the evidence-based Emergency Laparotomy Pathway Quality Improvement Care (ELPQuIC) bundle within the NHS trusts.

The programme has brought together dozens of staff at collaborative learning events from across the trusts – from emergency departments, radiology, acute admission units, theatres, anaesthetics and intensive care.

Emergency Laparotomy Collaborative has been identified as one of the highest impact programmes developed by all 15 AHSNs. As a result we are now in advanced stages of planning for exporting this programme nationwide.

Find out more

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