

Improving communication between anaesthetists and recovery nurses at a Tertiary Paediatric Hospital

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Background and relevance

Effective handover between healthcare professionals is essential for the continuity, quality and safety of patient care. Miscommunication has the potential to cause patient harm (for example through double dosing of medication).

Problem

The standardised aide memoire on the back of the paper anaesthetic charts that were used for anaesthetist to recovery handover was discontinued with the introduction of the electronic patient record.

Strategy for change

Following a critical incident, a working group was formed consisting of anaesthetists and recovery staff to re-standardise handover and improve patient safety. The content of the aide memoire was updated and laminated copies were placed prominently in each of the recovery bays (Figure 1).

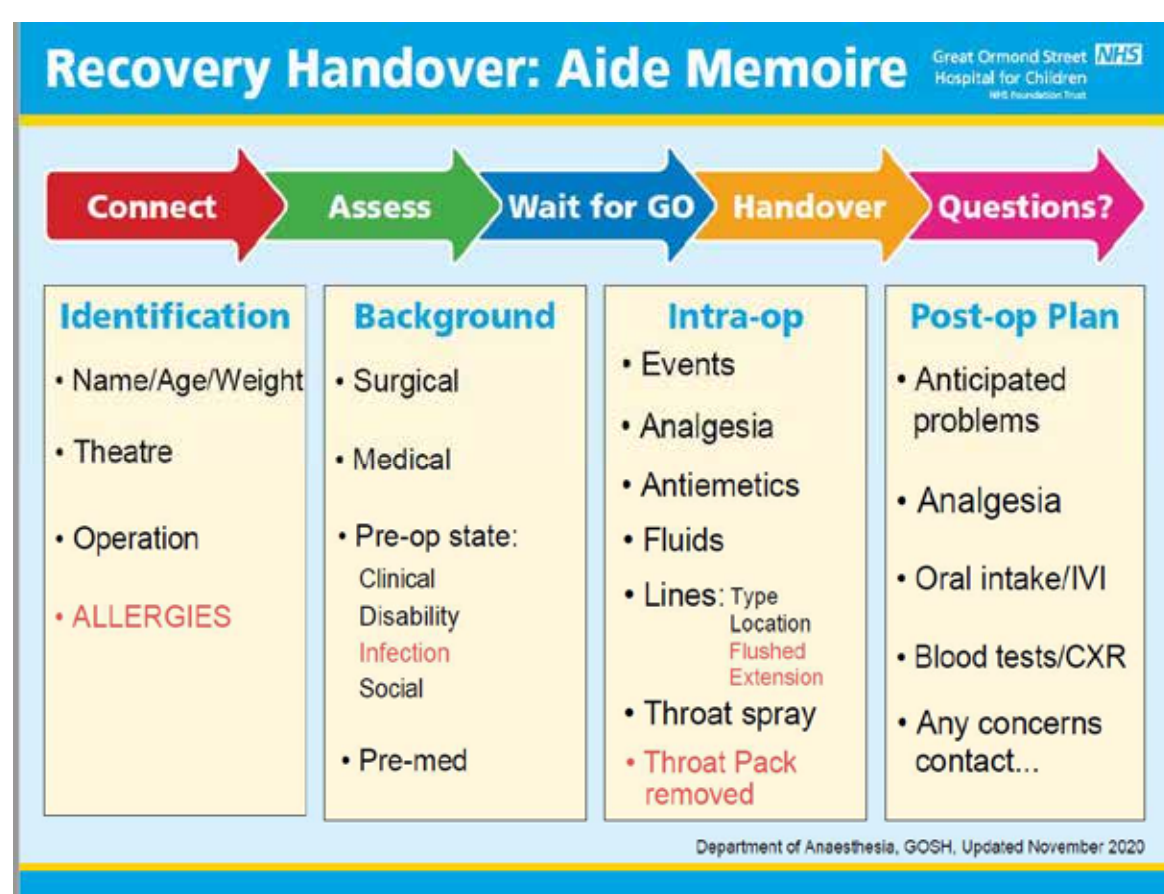


Figure 1: Anaesthesia-Recovery Handover Aide Memoire

A snap audit by recovery was done at the start of December 2020 looking at its use in main recovery: no-one used it that day. Training was then provided to the recovery team to encourage its use.

References:

- Royal College of Anaesthetists – Chapter 4 - Guidelines for the provision of anaesthetic services for postoperative care 2019 (5.4)
- Recovery handover: Aide memoir - Department of Anaesthesia, GOSH updated November 2020

Information and training was also provided to the anaesthetists via e-mail, consultant reminders from colleagues and the theatre matron, the anaesthetic breakfast meetings and our departmental WhatsApp group.

Measure of improvement

Two repeat audits were done in January 2021 – one by recovery prior to the departmental meeting and one by an anaesthetic trainee afterwards (Figure 2).

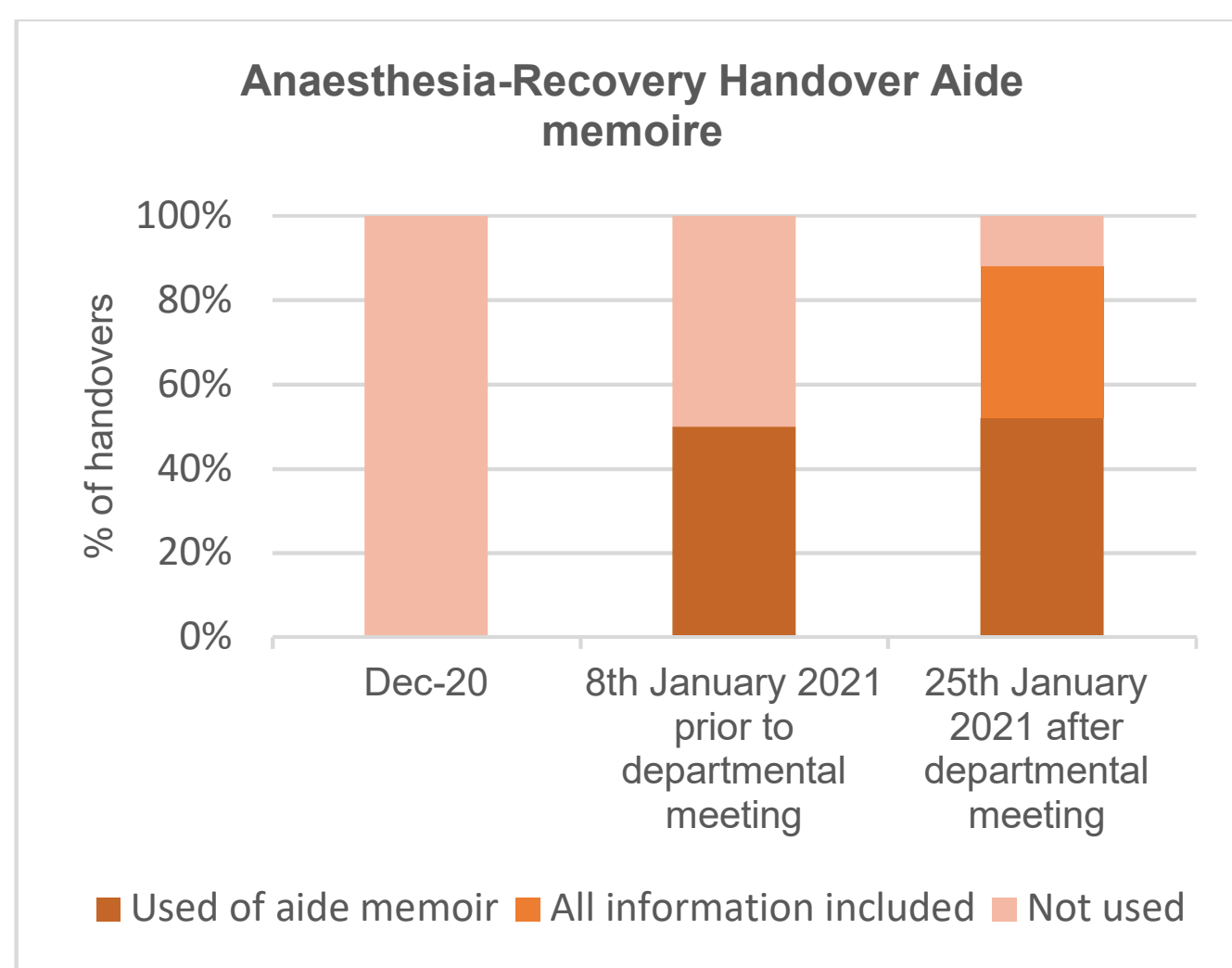


Figure 2: Audits of use of Handover Aide memoire

Lessons learnt

Strengthening communication between anaesthetic and recovery requires both teams to work together to improve engagement in handover. Aide memoires are useful tools in this process when used correctly (ensuring the patient is stable and monitored before the transfer of information).

Message for others

Good communication between anaesthetists and recovery staff is vital to provide the best ongoing care for patients once they have left the operating theatre. The use of a mutually agreed aide memoire can assist this.