

Improving Awareness of Signs of Lithium Toxicity

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Aim

Increase awareness of signs of lithium toxicity among patients attending the lithium clinic in Lagan Valley Hospital by 50% by 1st July 2021.

Project Background

Lithium remains the gold-standard mood stabiliser for bipolar affective disorder. Monitoring is required due to its narrow therapeutic index and side effects. Although mortality rates of lithium toxicity are low at less than 1%, serious neurological sequelae may be irreversible, including ataxia, dysarthria, and dysmetria. In most cases, lithium toxicity may be avoided. Patient education on signs of lithium toxicity is a key part of patient safety, along with regular monitoring of levels.

Whilst researching the impact of SARS-nCOV-2 infection or COVID-19 disease on lithium monitoring, it became apparent some patients were unaware of signs of lithium toxicity despite being on lithium for many years. This is an important area of patient safety that requires attention.

Intervention

Collaboration with a patient who previously had toxicity led to a business card design containing information on common side effects and signs of toxicity in simplified language. Information from the shared care lithium guidance was utilised. Patients attending Lithium clinic are provided with the card.

Outcome Measure

The mean number of side effects and signs of toxicity of Lithium remembered after receiving and reading the card.

Secondary Measure

Patient opinion on the card.

“Easy to understand”

COMMON LITHIUM SIDE EFFECTS

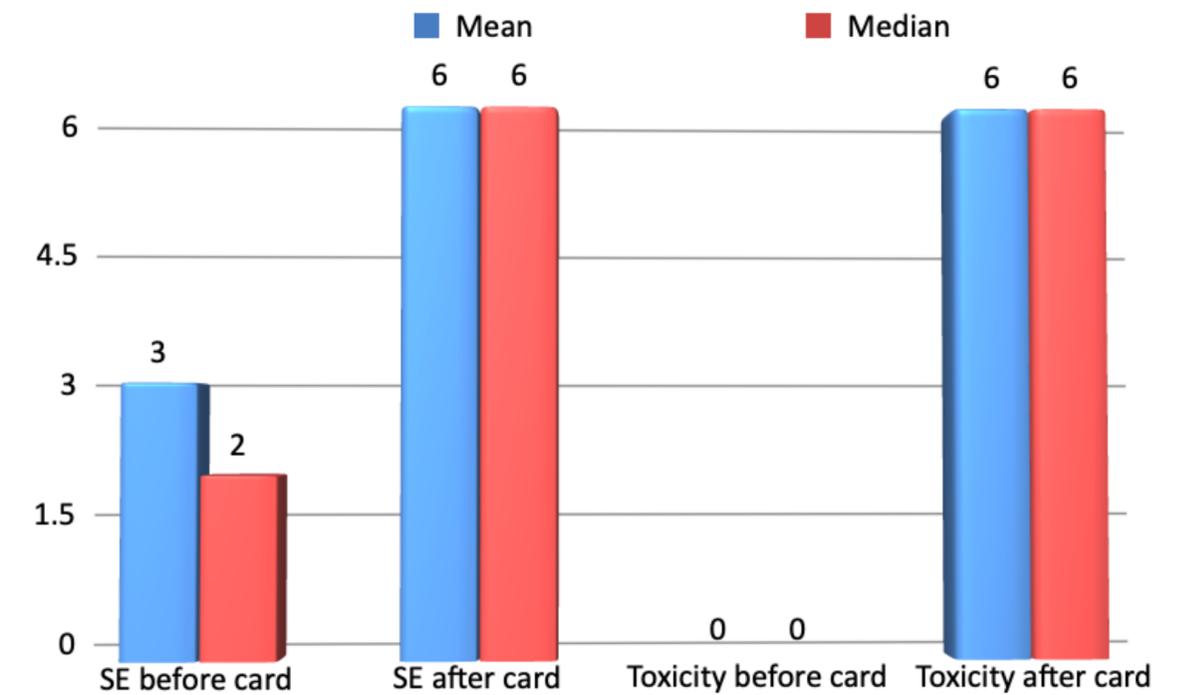
- shaky hands
- drinking more / feeling more thirsty
- peeing more
- feeling sick
- diarrhoea
- swollen hands or feet
- weight gain

SEE A DOCTOR IF YOU HAVE:

- larger shake in hands
 - blurry vision
 - sounding drunk
 - feeling weak / too sleepy
 - unsteady walking or falls
 - being confused / having a fit
 - feeling sick or vomiting
- YOUR LITHIUM LEVEL MIGHT BE TOO HIGH**

“It’s a good memory refresh”

“I didn’t know what was wrong at the time, if I had a card, I would’ve known to get my levels checked”



Into the Future

- Lithium cards now available in Irish and Polish
- Expansion of lithium cards into other clinics in the SETrust
- Posters for waiting areas

Najczęściej występujące działania uboczne litu:

- drżenie rąk
- nadmierne picie / uczucie wzmożonego pragnienia
- nadmierne oddawanie moczu
- nudności
- biegunka
- opuchnięte dłonie i stopy
- przyrost masy ciała

Fo-iarmhairtí coitianta litiam:

- crith ar na lámha
- ag ól níos mó / tart méadaithe
- ag mún níos mó
- ag mothú tinn
- buinneach
- lámha nó cosa ata
- méadú meáchain

“It’ll make me aware if there’s anything untoward”

“I didn’t know about those effects before”

“I can look at it until I know it”