

O86

Linking evidence to practice: Development of a Stroke and Transient Ischaemic Attack (TIA) care bundle for Australian Emergency Departments

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Background: Stroke is Australia's second single greatest killer after coronary heart disease and is a leading cause of disability.¹ Acute stroke is a medical emergency. Appropriate initial management can reduce disability and mortality resulting from stroke.

Purpose: To describe an approach to prioritise key guideline recommendations for implementation to improve clinical outcomes for patients presenting to emergency departments with stroke or TIA.

Methods: The National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) National Institute of Clinical Studies (NICS), in partnership with a clinical reference group and the Australian National Stroke Foundation (NSF), selected a care bundle approach to prioritise core recommendations from the NSF guidelines. A care bundle is defined as a group of several simple, evidence based recommendation that, when combined, define best care and significantly improve patient outcomes.

The prioritisation process was undertaken using a decision matrix where recommendations selected needed to be: based on sound evidence, where there is gap in practice, implementable in terms of resources, non controversial; and measurable.

The process has also involved extensive review from leading emergency clinicians and stroke specialists both internationally and nationally.

Results: The resulting stroke care bundle is made up of six core evidence based recommendations that are precursors to ongoing best practice management.

Documents developed to support the stroke care bundle include a comprehensive core document that provides introductory information, evidence summaries and an implementation guide, a poster and a clinician summary.

Discussion: Identifying context specific formats an important consideration to increase the uptake of guideline recommendations. Emergency departments are increasingly busy and are faced with a broad range of presentations that are often complex requiring information in formats that complement their practice environment. The bundle approach seeks to ensure all patients with the same condition are treated consistently according to best practice.