The Role of Pre-operative Foot and Ankle Group in Improving Patient Care and Efficiency

Foot & Ankle Category: Other

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Introduction
Day case surgery for foot and ankle procedures have been increasing in popularity and for a lot of procedures is becoming the norm. Day case surgery benefit includes reduced hospital stay for the patient with associated cost savings for the hospital, high patient satisfaction with no increase in complication rates. In 2008 we set up a pre-operative foot and ankle group to improve our service to patients as well as efficiency. Patients are seen 3 weeks before surgery by 3 groups of health professional. A specialist foot and ankle nurse re-explains the procedure and post-operative course, standard pre-operative evaluation is carried out and all patients are seen by a physiotherapist. The therapist explains the patient weight bearing status and gives advice on how to carry this out. Where necessary, patients are given crutches, assessed for safety on stairs and take their crutches home to practise with.

Methods
We looked prospectively at length of stay and physiotherapy intervention for all elective foot and ankle patients at our institution. We evaluated the first 3 months of the years 2007 to 2011. All data was collected from the patients’ records on the computer system.

Results
Average of length of stay for fore and midfoot surgery improved from 2 days in 2007 to 1.03 by 2011. For hindfoot and ankle procedures the length of stay decreased from 3.3 days in 2007 to 1.94 in 2011. This correlated to the introduction of the pre-operative group after 2007. There was a correlation with patients not attending the pre-operative group and their subsequent unplanned admission. There have been no re-admissions for mobility reasons. It is no longer necessary for patients to be seen by physiotherapists on the ward. This has huge cost savings for both beds and staff utilisation, particularly that of the physiotherapy service.

Conclusion
A pre-operative group is a highly efficient method of enhancing patient care and improving length of stay at the hospital for the patient. This service not only provides a significant cost savings but it provides lots of benefits for the patients without any detriment to the care they receive. The overall cost saving for the hospital since setting the pre-operative group is around £35,400 per annum together with extremely high patient satisfaction levels.