

ESSENCE OF CARE MAKES A DIFFERENCE

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Introduction and Purpose: Essence of Care (EOC) (DOH, 2001) was launched as a tool to help practitioners take a patient-focused and structured approach to sharing and comparing practice. This resulted in the development of benchmarks covering eight areas of care. In December 2003, our Trust introduced EOC. The renal unit chose to work on the benchmark of Food and Nutrition.

Method An EOC group was formed and comprised of representatives from each clinical area in the renal unit, and the renal dietitians. Initial scoring of food and nutrition practice using the benchmarking tool resulted in a mediocre 'C', where 'A' is best practice and 'E' is poor. From this assessment, we identified a number of action plans to improve our score, which could ultimately improve the quality of care for our patients.

The following action plans were introduced: 1) a new nutrition screening tool to identify 'at risk' patients; 2) protected meal times and clearing of eating areas to ensure an environment conducive to eating; 3) red trays to identify patients who need monitoring and those that need assistance to eat; 4) improved food and fluid charts, plus guidelines estimating fluid intake, to improve the monitoring of our patients.

A week-long rolling programme of education was developed to educate all multi-disciplinary team members on the action plans. A notice board and newsletter were produced to improve awareness of EOC and highlight the importance of all the action plans.

Findings: After implementing most of our action plans, we re-scored ourselves in August 2004, as an improved 'B'. Feedback from patients, relatives and staff has been positive and an audit has shown that by introducing protected meal times, we are providing an environment more conducive to eating. These action plans are to be rolled out to the rest of the Trust and we hope that continued work shows further improvement.