

NHS London Alignment toolkit

Examples of service developments/initiatives/projects

Title	Critically Appraised Topic addressing the question: what is the relative effectiveness of below knee compression stockings compared with above knee compression stockings in reducing the risk of DVT in a heterogeneous patient population?
Lead library	Archway Healthcare Library, Holborn Union Building, Archway Campus, Highgate Hill, London N19 5LW
Summary	As part of a series of Critically Appraised Topics (CAT), evidence on the effectiveness of different lengths of compression stockings was considered. The project was a joint undertaking between the Lead Research Nurse and the Clinical Librarian. The completed CAT led to the introduction of a uniform policy within the Whittington Trust, and an estimated saving of £90,000 pa.
Partner organisations	Whittington Hospital NHS Trust
Key audiences	Trust managers and Orthopaedic surgeons
Description of the service	<p>During 2004 the Lead Research Nurse of the Whittington Hospital NHS Trust and the Clinical Librarian of Archway Healthcare worked on a series of CATS. These focussed on contentious, very specific questions related to clinical effectiveness. The topics were suggested by Trust managers. The Clinical Librarian would undertake a systematic search for evidence and then work with the Lead Research on producing a CAT. The recommendations of the CAT were then considered by Clinical committees within the Trust.</p> <p>One such question was whether knee length or thigh length stockings were more effective in preventing DVT. Practice varied within the Trust. The literature search showed that there was no significant clinical advantage of thigh length stockings for most patient populations. In addition, thigh length stockings were harder to put on correctly and tended to have lower compliance rates. They were also considerably more expensive. The Trusts' committees supported the findings of the CAT and the Trust moved to a policy of using knee length stockings only.</p>
Service	Staff time – approximately 15 hours Clinical Librarian
Customer Involvement	Joint working with lead research nurse; presentations to Trust committees
Benefits of the service to the customer	More effective use of resources; clear policy
Collaborative working	Joint working with lead research nurse; presentations to Trust committees

Funding streams Core Library funding

Further information The CAT was reviewed in 2005 and again in 2007. The latter review was prompted by NICE guidance on Venous Thromboembolism (April 2007). This suggested that Thigh length stockings were more effective in preventing DVT in high risk patients and should be preferred. Their conclusions were based partially on an RCT from 2004. However, the NICE guidelines appear to have been written too soon to take account of a 2006 Systematic Review which did not find clear evidence to favour thigh length stockings. This analysis of the literature by the Clinical Librarian was passed on to the Clinical Guidelines Committee, who were able to respond to NICE accordingly.

Start date 2004

End date Ongoing (further review of the policy)

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Date submitted 23 June 2008

Edited Sue Lacey Bryant 17-08-08