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Shortening the Duration of Antimicrobial Therapy in Uncomplicated Skin and Soft Tissue Infections

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Background and Aim

**Background:**
Skin and soft tissue infections (SSTIs) are common occurrences in children. The “Practice Guidelines for the Diagnosis and Management of Skin and Soft Tissue Infections: 2014 Update by the Infectious Diseases Society of America” states the “recommended duration of antimicrobial therapy is 5 days, but treatment should be extended if the infection has not improved within this time period (strong recommendation, high quality evidence).” Short course antimicrobial therapy for SSTIs may be beneficial to prevent development of resistant bacteria, increase cost-effectiveness of therapy and reduce side effects of antimicrobial therapy.

**Problem:**
Children treated for SSTIs at Children’s Mercy Kansas Hospital (CMK) ED often receive longer duration antimicrobial therapy (7-14 days) with variable recommendations for follow-up. Initially, 4% of children treated for SSTIs at CMK ED received prescriptions for 5 days or less. Initially, 4% of children treated for SSTIs at CMK ED received prescriptions for 5 days or less.

**Aim Statement:**
Increase the percentage of pediatric patients seen in the CMK ED receiving outpatient antibiotic prescriptions for uncomplicated SSTIs for durations of 5 days or less or from 4% to 25% by January 2018, to 50% by July 2018, with an end goal of 80% by January 2019.

Barriers and Limitations

**Barriers:**
Challenges included a transition to ICD-10 and multiple updates to the electronic medical record (EMR), which impacted data collection and review. Due to this challenge, it took longer than anticipated for some interventions.

**Limitations:**
Failure analysis is limited to patients seen at Children’s Mercy facilities and does not consider patients seen by primary care providers or admitted at other hospitals in the area.

Methods

1. Educated providers regarding recommendations including exclusion/inclusion criteria because there were knowledge gaps identified in a preliminary survey of providers. Information was posted in an easily visible place in the EMR and presented regularly at staff meetings.
2. Completed chart reviews regularly to evaluate missed opportunities to prescribe shorter duration of antibiotics for uncomplicated SSTIs.
3. System modifications completed to help promote compliance with shorter duration therapy for SSTIs. Developed an antibiotic shortcut folder with the EMR with pre-filled treatment durations for shorter courses of antibiotics, as this intervention worked well in the past.
4. Distributed monthly summaries to individual providers to show performance regarding treatment of SSTIs and highlight success in meeting the project goals. Providers requested this data for review.
5. Ensured failure rates for short course antibiotic treatment did not exceed that of the previously prescribed longer duration antibiotics. Collected data on patients returning within 28 days of initial visit to any Children’s Mercy location and admitted for IV antibiotics. Baseline failure rate was 1%.

Results and Analysis

**Results:**
Since initiation of this project, there has been marked improvement and now 58% of pediatric patients diagnosed with uncomplicated SSTIs are being prescribed antibiotics for 5 days or less, consistent with current practice guidelines. This has greatly enhanced antibiotic stewardship by reducing unnecessarily long durations of treatment.

Conclusion

Since initiation of this project, there has been marked improvement and now 56% of pediatric patients diagnosed with uncomplicated SSTIs are being prescribed antibiotics for 5 days or less, consistent with current practice guidelines. This has greatly enhanced antibiotic stewardship by reducing unnecessarily long durations of treatment.

**Future Goals:**
1. Continue to make changes to reach goal of 80% by January 2019.
3. Propagation to Adele Hall ED and CMH Urgent Cares if interested.
4. Use the knowledge gained in future QI projects.
5. Ensure new staff are educated on guidelines and project goals.

References:
- Stevens, Dennis; Bl ids, Alan; Chambers, Henry; Dellinger, Pachter; Goldman; Elle; Gorbach, Sherwood; Hirschmann, Jan; Kenton, Prendergast; Bose; Wade; Jones, Practice Guidelines for the Diagnosis and Management of Skin and Soft Tissue Infections: 2014 Update by the Infectious Diseases Society of America. Clinical Infectious Diseases. April 2014.
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