



Health-System Pharmacy News

Severe-Sepsis Care Improves with Order Set

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SEATTLE, WA, 11 June 2008 — Patients with severe sepsis whose hospital treatment starts in the emergency department fare better when the staff follows a standardized set of orders, researchers at Barnes-Jewish Hospital in St. Louis have found.

"The timing of therapy for these patients . . . determines their early outcomes and their long-term outcomes as well," said Scott Micek, Pharm.D., BCPS, a clinical pharmacist in critical care at Barnes-Jewish, during an educational session on Tuesday at the ASHP Summer Meeting in Seattle.

Micek led the multidisciplinary team whose improvements to the care of patients with severe sepsis were recognized in December 2007 with receipt of the Award for Excellence in Medication-Use Safety.

The treatment of severe sepsis requires many things to happen quickly, Micek said.

In the first two hours, for example, a patient may receive four liters of i.v. fluids, two antimicrobial infusions, a corticosteroid, a dextrose injection, and be started on an infusion of a vasopressor. That's just the medications.

"There needs to be some standardization, some logical thought process in the care of these patients," Micek said.

To choreograph the care of patients with severe sepsis, he said, the team developed a standardized set of orders for the treatment of severe sepsis, got it approved by numerous committees, and educated the staff.

Staff education included explaining to the pharmacists the importance of having the antimicrobial infusions ready to infuse at the precise times stated in the order set.

Micek said patients whose severe sepsis was treated in the first six months after rollout of the order set had a significantly better chance than similar patients in the preceding six months of surviving at least 28 days and having a shorter length of stay.

Craig A. McCammon, Pharm.D., BCPS, a clinical pharmacist in emergency medicine at Barnes-Jewish, works to maintain the improved level of care.

He said that, as part of the performance improvement initiative, the monthly newsletter for the

The Award for Excellence in Medication-Use Safety was created by the ASHP Research and Education Foundation in 2004 and is sponsored by the Cardinal Health Foundation.

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