Management of lower bowel dysfunction including DRE and DRF
RCN guidance for nurses

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Prevalence of Chronic Constipation and Faecal Incontinence

- Chronic Constipation is very common in the western world, estimated to affect one third of the population (1)
- Has cost implications in terms of medication, containment equipment and nursing time
- More common in women than men
- 20-50% of the elderly living in community have symptoms of constipation (2) rising to 80% in care homes (3)
- The estimated prevalence of FI is 1-15% (NICE, 2007)
- Affects 1 in 5 individuals over the age of 65
- Under age of 40 more prevalent in females, over 40 no difference between the sexes
- 10-50% of older people living in care homes suffer with FI (Nelson, 2004)
- Significantly lower in older people living at home 2-5%

2) Harari et al 1996 Bowel habit in relation to age and gender, Findings from the National Health Interview Survey and clinical implications, Arch Intern Med 156 (3) 315-9
So why are bowels such a Taboo Subject?

- One of our first socializations as a child
- Faeces elicits disgust in adults
- Defecation is as normal as eating but “not nice” to talk about, a taboo subject
- Bowel care is a fundamental area of patient care that is frequently overlooked
- Often a neglected area of care
The competences for digital rectal examination (DRE) and digital removal of faeces (DRF), from an academic and clinical perspective, have not been a nursing priority.

The intimate nature of DRE and fears of litigation and accusations of abuse, have caused nurses in the past and present, confusion regarding their professional and legal responsibilities.

Still in 2012 student nurses are told that DRE/DRF are not a nurses role.

Evidence based bowel care is of paramount importance for the quality of life of our patients.
The History Royal College of Nursing DRE publication

- The first RCN publication was published in 1999 entitled “Digital Rectal Examination and Manual Removal of Faeces; A Guide on the Role of the Nurse” the lead author being Ray Addison
- This was published following a survey of nurses about their knowledge and attitudes around bowel care, DRE and DRF
The History Royal College of Nursing DRE publication

- This document gave more clarity about these procedures
- Who could carry them out
- What training should be available and how it should be structured
- Became one of the most popular RCN publications
- Clarifying the importance of providing good bowel management
- Also the need for information on this subject in the nursing arena
- Updated in similar format in 2000
Skills for Health

- In 2008 the Skills for Health (SfH) developed the National Occupational Standards (NOS) relating to continence care including bowel dysfunction
- 5 that relate to bowel care
  - CC01 Assess bladder and bowel dysfunction
  - CC08 Enable individuals to use containment products
  - CC09 Assist individuals to effectively evacuate their bowels
  - CC12 Enable individuals to undertake pelvic floor muscle exercises
  - CC13 Enable individuals with complex pelvic dysfunction to undertake pelvic floor muscle rehabilitation
To coincide with the development of the NOS, the RCN updated the DRE document

Entitled: Bowel care, including digital rectal examination and manual removal of faeces: RCN guidance for nurses
2008 RCN Bowel Care Publication

- Incorporating the previous RCN DRE document and the 5 bowel care related NOS into one user friendly document
- Making the NOS easier to interpret, break down & apply
- Proved just as popular as previous RCN publications on this topic indicating that clarification of this aspect of care was still required
This excellent resource for RCN members has once again been updated to incorporate the most recent best practice in bowel care.

“Management of lower bowel dysfunction, including DRE and DRF. A guidance for nurses.”
2012 RCN Lower Bowel Care Publication

- Updated with the help of Fiona Hibbert Nurse Consultant at St Thomas’s Hospital
- Stephen Miles Chair of RCN continence forum
- Christine Norton and Maureen Coggrave involved as clinical advisors
- Supported by Coloplast Ltd
- This publication will help nurses to understand the function of the bowel, the need for appropriate assessment, and provides guidance on how nurses can positively help patients with their bowel disorders
Contents Of Document

Been condensed and more logical order also has procedures included

- Anatomy and physiology
- Definitions and causes of bowel dysfunction
- Assessment, investigations (including DRE), diagnosis and prognosis
- Interventions to improve and maintain bowel function (including DRF and rectal irrigation)
- Pelvic floor muscle exercises, sphincter exercises, biofeedback and electrical stimulation
- Pharmacology and prescribing
- Lower bowel care emergencies and complications
- Consent, confidentiality, chaperoning, privacy and dignity
- Communication
- Documentation
- Risk assessment
- Infection control (including clostridium difficile) and care of the environment
- The health care assistant
- Legislation, policy and good practice
- Appendix 1: Procedure for digital rectal examination (DRE)
- Appendix 2: Procedure for digital removal of faeces (DRF)
- Appendix 3: Procedure for digital rectal stimulation (DRS)
- References and further reading
2012 RCN Lower Bowel Care Publication

- Nursing focused but can be used by all healthcare professionals
- Extension of national occupational standards (NOS)
- Creates a care bundle
- NICE and other links
- Not comprehensive or a literature review
- Easy to use and understand
**2012 RCN Lower Bowel Care Publication**

- Reflects essential nursing care which is not of an advanced or complex nature and supports nurses in a wide range of activity related to bowel care.
- Will be vital to every nurse in all care settings in the delivery of bowel care to patients.
- Will support competency frameworks.
- Can be used to benchmark your service against.
2012 RCN Lower Bowel Care Care Publication

- A framework on which to develop lower bowel dysfunction-related teaching material, programmes of learning and courses
- A point of reference to support academic work related to bowel care for nurses
- In production of protocols, guidelines and procedures at a local level
- To stimulate nursing audit and research activity in bowel care
- Ensure that evidence based bowel care is consistent across acute and community settings
HOPEFULLY STOP CASES LIKE THIS HAPPENING!!!!

Hospital experience of a patient with a spinal injury who was managed well in the Community

• On a medical ward in my local hospital I found that the staff refused to carry out a manual and did not believe that my bowels would not work without digital stimulation. I was given 2 litres of picolax and left perched on a commode. My tummy became swollen and I started vomiting. The reaction of the staff was that gravity would eventually help it come out!!!!!!
FINALLY

- With using this document, knowledge, skills and attitudes around bowel care will improve.
- It will enable more nurses to be competent to carry out evidenced based care including DRE.
- That patients will receive the same care whether it be in the acute or community setting.
- It will confirm that DRE and DRF are nursing roles and that they are not against the law.
- It is hoped that this document will prove to be as popular as the previous publications and provide a useful resource on which to base training.
- The publication is available to download on the RCN website.
THANK YOU FOR LISTENING
ANY QUESTIONS?