Transient Ischaemic Attack 999 Emergency Referral feasibility trial (TIER): Recruitment and intervention usage

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This project is funded by Health and Care Research Wales (project number 1053). The views and opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of Health and Care Research Wales, NHS Wales or Welsh Government.

Background

Early specialist assessment of Transient Ischaemic Attack (TIA) can reduce the risk of stroke and death. This study assessed feasibility of undertaking a multi-centre randomised trial to evaluate clinical and cost effectiveness of referral of patients attended by emergency ambulance Paramedic with low-risk TIA directly to specialist TIA clinic for early review.

Methods

- Developed a protocol and referral pathway for Paramedics to assess patients
- Paramedics who volunteered to participate were randomly allocated to intervention or control group
- Intervention Paramedics were trained to deliver the intervention during the patient recruitment period
- Control paramedics continued to deliver care as usual
- Patients with TIA were identified from hospital records
- We aimed to recruit 86 patients over a 12 month recruitment period and pre-defined progression criteria related to feasibility of intervention delivery and trial methods.

Results

- Development and recruitment phases are complete with outcome follow up ongoing
- 89 of 134 (66%) paramedics participated in TIER
- 53 (3.8%) of 1377 patients identified as having a TIA from hospital records during the patient recruitment period were attended by a TIER Paramedic and identified as eligible for trial inclusion
- 3 of 36 (8%) patients attended by intervention paramedics were referred directly to the TIA clinic
- 1 incident appeared to be eligible for referral but attended the ED
- 1 was attended by an Intervention paramedic who was not TIER trained
- 1 patient record was missing
- 1 patient was refused a TIA Clinic referral and was referred to their own GP
- All others attended by intervention Paramedics (n=29) were recorded with contraindications to receiving referral: FAST positive (n=13); ABCD2 score >3 (n=5); already taking warfarin (n=2); crescendo TIA (n=1) other clinical factors (n=8)

- Preliminary results indicate challenges in recruitment and low referral rates.
- The low-risk 999 TIA population suitable for Emergency Department avoidance may be smaller than previously thought.
- Further analyses will focus on whether progression criteria for a definitive trial were met, and clinical outcomes from this feasibility trial.