

Triage in the light of four hour targets

Results of a survey of current practice in Emergency Departments in the UK

Julian Newell

Peter Smith

Sheffield Hallam University

Triage – Result of a Survey 2008

A little overview

- **From the French**
 - 'trier' to pick, sort or select**
- **Patient's Charter 1991 – Standard 5**
 - “You will be seen and your need for treatment assessed”**
- **“To assess a patient and assign a priority based on clinical need”**

Manchester Triage System (1997)

Triage – Result of a Survey 2008

Manchester Triage System

- **Devised by Senior nurses and doctors working in A&E's**
- **Goal: Nationally accepted and standardised triage system**
- **Logical and simple to use**
- **52 'Presenting Complaints'**
- **Unified 'Presentational Flow Charts'**

Manchester Triage System

Manchester Triage System

1	Immediate	Red	0
2	Very Urgent	Orange	Within 10 minutes
3	Urgent	Yellow	Within 1 hour
4	Standard	Green	Within 2 hours
5	Non-Urgent	Blue	Within 4 hours

Triage – Result of a Survey 2008

Manchester Triage System

Never a national gold standard, Local varieties and interpretations

Overton-Brown (2001)

MTS meant minor patients were bumped by majors – long waits

Sorting Patients Triage Target Time (TTT)

- Add 'Target Time' to time of arrival (TOA)**
- Patient 'A' TOA 10:10 category 3 = 11:10**
- Patient 'B' TOA 10:21 category 4 = 12:21**
- Patient 'C' TOA 10:23 category 3 = 11:21**

Triage – Result of a Survey 2008

Manchester Triage System

1990's Government put out challenge

- provide fast, fair and convenient access to healthcare**
- Should be no wait for this care**

Introduction of:

- 'Four Hour Target'**
- 'See and Treat'**

Category 5 – target time of Four Hours!

What impact did this have on 'triage'?

Triage – Result of a Survey 2008

**Sent to 50 Emergency Departments
in England and Wales**

Questions asked

- Use of triage system before and after 2002**
- MTS or other**
- Which patients are triaged**
- 'See and Treat' in operation? Hours? Staffed?**
- Triage training? After how long in ED?**

**27 questionnaires returned
54% return rate**

Triage – Result of a Survey 2008

Did your Department use a triage system prior to 2002?

25 responded 'yes'

With 21 reporting sorting patients by triage target time

'1st come 1st served'

'ambulance patients taking priority'

Triage – Result of a Survey 2008

Does your Department now use a triage system?

96% responded 'yes'

With 22 using Manchester Triage System

(a few combining with MEWS)

4 using MEWS or National Triage System

Triage – Result of a Survey 2008

What patients are allocated a triage category?

All/Majors – 19

**Dependant on time of day
Some streamed to See and Treat
and not triaged**

'triaged if delay in dr/enp'
'no triage nurse designated at night'

Triage – Result of a Survey 2008

Are patients sorted by triage target time to be seen by clinician?

Yes – 22

No – 4

Not answered - 3

'when triage not in use – receptionist alert nurses'

'contentious'

'priority'

'introducing minors triage nurse for minors'

'seen by dr or enp in time order'

Triage – Result of a Survey 2008

On 'See and Treat' operating?

**Only 16 respondents stated
operate See and Treat**

Hours of operation?

'depends on # of doctors'

'as required' – 'ad hoc'

'when Consultant on shop floor'

Three 24/7 mostly between 9 to 9

Staffed by mixture of Doctors – ENP's

Triage – Result of a Survey 2008

Do nurses undertake a Triage training package ?

All bar two – Yes
'currently putting together'

From starting work in Department

Immediately	3
Within six months	9
Six months to one year	6
After one year	7

*' 3 day course
– competency
framework
– 10 majors, 10
minors, 10 paed's'*

Triage in 21st Century– Discussion

Has the introduction of 'four hour target' affected triage?

Is Manchester Triage System as relevant today as it was in 1990's?

What effect has development of 'EWS' had on priorities?

Triage – Where next?

**Authors recognise limitations
of this survey!**

A revised survey?

Direct observation?

Opening of a debate!

Triage – the debate will continue!

Thank You

Questions

Julian Newell

j.newell@shu.ac.uk



Peter Smith

p.w.smith@shu.ac.uk