Description of Project

As a relatively new ‘advanced practitioner’ role, Critical Care Paramedics (CCPs) provide advanced clinical skills and knowledge to a range of calls including ‘immediately life threatening’ emergencies, and critical care retrieval services.

In the UK it is currently an undefined role with no common code of practice or clinical governance. The aim of this study was to explore the current use of CCPs across the UK, and assess the views from a range of relevant stakeholders leading pre-hospital critical care services to date.

A web based survey design was used to collect information on current CCP use as well as elicit a range of views on skills, role and scope of practice.

Stakeholders who responded included air ambulance charities, professional organisations and ambulance trusts. 50% of organisations used CCPs as a primary response. Essential skills were highlighted and ranked in order of priority. Various views on the CCP role were also summarised in the study.

The survey confirmed the role is currently an undefined one and variably used within UK practice. There was agreement on the need for core skills and competencies to be standardised, but the nature of these is still open to debate.

Key Questions

Why was this innovative?
The primary objective of this study was to ascertain stakeholder views regarding which clinical skills CCPs should possess. Secondary objectives were to identify and describe the broader issues that were seen to influence the role, development and use of CCPs within a UK context.

What were the key outcomes?
Echoing the notion that the CCP is an undefined role, this study showed there to be a huge variance in CCP led service delivery, with a varying degree of scope of practice across the country. For many though, not enough is known about this specialist role.

What’s next?
Identifying and collating views around what should constitute essential and desirable practice frameworks for such a role, it is hoped this study will be able to further add detail towards the suggestion that CCPs could improve patient outcomes for those who find themselves critically ill.

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