

Title

Canadian and UK experiences and opinions of a safety strap designed to secure patients during radiotherapy

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Purpose

A serious 2000 safety incident at a cancer centre in Canada saw a patient fall from the treatment couch. A regional investigation recommended use of a securing safety strap. We evaluate Canadian staff experiences of using the strap and explore the potential for use in the UK.

Methods and Materials

A two-stage design was guided by an evidence-based practice (EBP) framework. Stage one was a questionnaire to capture treating radiation technologists' experiences and opinions of the strap at a single centre. Quantitative data was analysed descriptively and free-text data via a content analysis. Stage two used semi-structured interviews to explore views of three experienced UK treatment radiographers.

Results

Only 25 out of approximately 130 eligible staff responded to the questionnaire. 24% (n=6) 'strongly disagree', 28% (n=7) 'agree', and 48% (n=12) 'neither agree nor disagree' that they would recommend the strap to other departments. Most think strap use should be at staff discretion, with patients with dementia/cognitive impairment ranked as the group benefiting most. It was confirmed that patients sometimes refuse the strap. Themes arising from stage two interviews are: patient benefit (for select patients only); patient comfort (versus control/restraint); practical implementation.

Conclusion

Those who use the strap are ambivalent about its value for patients. Evaluation of the effectiveness and acceptability of the device for different patients and staff may promote both staff enthusiasm towards the device and EBP.

Implications for practice: The response to the patient fall incident was impressive. Open dissemination of events surrounding safety incidents are vital to our collective learning. Adequate resources are required to evaluate implementation of safety initiatives.

Keywords

patient safety incident; patient fall; device implementation; radiation therapy; evidence-based radiography