

16th November 2020

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Dear colleagues

Care of hip fracture patients during the COVID-19 pandemic: advice to Health Boards in Scotland.

Research has shown that acute hip fracture patients in Scottish hospitals who contract COVID-19 have greatly increased mortality rates (Hall et al, 2020ⁱ; also see attached summary of updated study). The usual 30-day mortality for hip fracture patients in Scotland is around 7%. Those with COVID-19 have a 30-day mortality rate of 35%. Crucially, the research indicates that around 60% of cases of COVID-19 in hip fracture patients were because of hospital-acquired infection.

These findings have critical implications for the care of hip fracture patients. The Scottish Hip Fracture Audit Steering Group in conjunction with the Scottish Committee for Orthopaedics and Trauma (SCOT) is issuing the following advice to Health Boards:

1. Because of the vulnerability of this group of patients, good care as per the Scottish Standards of Care for Hip Fracture Patients must be maintained, with no or minimal redeployment of staff to other areas.
2. Test all hip fracture patients for SARS-CoV-2 at presentation. Additionally, where available, rapid COVID testing should be utilised to facilitate prompt diagnosis, risk stratification, and safe management.
3. Note that older hip fracture patients with COVID-19 may present with atypical symptoms (e.g. delirium, diarrhoea, etc.), or be asymptomatic. A high index of suspicion for COVID-19, and use of standardised infection protective measures, are therefore required at all times to prevent nosocomial spread among individuals.
4. Do not delay surgery to await SARS-CoV-2 test result.
5. Aim for discharge home as soon as possible with appropriate community support, preferably without transfer to downstream beds if possible.
6. As far as possible reduce the risk of hospital-acquired COVID-19 through avoiding intra-hospital boarding; note that boarding likely increases risk of exposure as well as increasing length of stay.

Yours Sincerely,

Prof. A. MacLulich,
Chair, Scottish Hip Fracture Audit.

Mr A. Murray
Chair, Scottish Committee for Orthopaedic Trauma

ⁱ Reference; Hall AJ, Clement ND, Farrow L, MacLulich AMJ, Dall GF, Scott CEH, Jenkins PJ, White TO, Duckworth AD; IMPACT-Scot Study Group. IMPACT-Scot report on COVID-19 and hip fractures. Bone Joint J. 2020 Sep;102-B (9):1219-1228.