

SPACES implementation sticker

Eleanor Whittaker¹

Author details can be found at the end of this article

Correspondence to:

Eleanor Whittaker;
elliewhittaker@btinternet.com

During the peak period of COVID-19 disease, healthcare staff worked hard to support those most affected, while trying to minimise exposure to themselves and others.

The SPACES (Sharing Patient Assessments Cuts Exposure for Staff) initiative, developed by the British Thoracic Society, Royal College of Nursing and Royal College of Physicians (2020), provides recommendations for a standardised approach by healthcare professionals caring for patients with or suspected to have COVID-19. It suggests undertaking as many tasks as possible for the patient at each contact, with the aim to ‘minimise patient contact – minimise staff exposure’.

The recommendations include seven clinical points relating to the basic assessment of a patient:

1. Cough
2. Breathlessness
3. Appetite
4. Fluid intake
5. Pain
6. Bowels
7. Passing urine.

At Noble’s Hospital, Isle of Man, these seven points were adapted into questions and placed on a small sticker. The sticker was distributed throughout the COVID-19 wards and placed in the medical notes. Information regarding the stickers and SPACES was emailed to all staff on the COVID-19 wards, directing the first healthcare professional attending each patient, each day, to answer the seven questions and place the sticker with answers in the medical notes.

During the ward rounds, doctors were able to use this information, with other parameters, to assess the patient’s severity of illness. This enabled senior clinicians to quickly see those who were most unwell, while juniors reviewed stable patients.

A follow-up survey found the stickers to be useful and 70% of staff thought they helped to reduce the number of times and number of members of staff that attend each patient daily. Going forward, research is needed to see whether these simple steps can impact on rates of hospital-acquired infection more broadly.

Author details

¹Department of Internal Medicine, Noble’s Hospital, Douglas, Isle of Man, UK

Reference

British Thoracic Society, Royal College of Nursing and Royal College of Physicians. Add SPACES To your COVID ward care approach. 2020. <https://www.brit-thoracic.org.uk/document-library/quality-improvement/covid-19/spaces-information-document/> (accessed 9 June 2020)

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