

# “Stools for Stools”

– combining medical and conservative treatments to reduce constipation in the elderly inpatient population

N Roth<sup>1</sup>; N Khalil<sup>2</sup>; C Moore-Gillon<sup>2</sup>; D James<sup>3</sup>; L Gilby<sup>4</sup>; C Morgan<sup>5</sup>

## Introduction

**Constipation** is a common cause of morbidity in the elderly. Its management is particularly challenging in the inpatient population where many factors, including both illness and treatment, exacerbate constipation. We describe a Quality Improvement Project to **reduce the rates of constipation** on a female Medicine for the Elderly ward, with a particular emphasis on **conservative measures**, such as the use of footstools to optimise posture when using commodes and toilets.

## Aims and objectives

- 1) Increase **patient frequency of bowel motions** to at least once every two days
- 1) Increase **bowel chart documentation** (nursing and doctor entries)

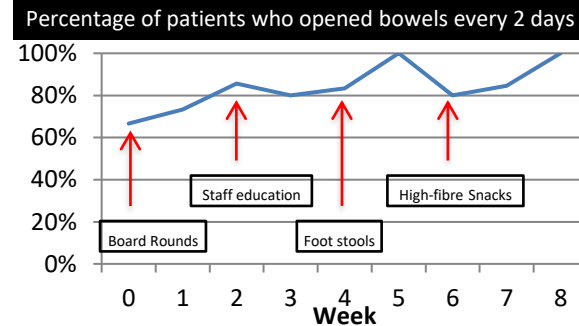
## Methods

- **Weekly** monitoring of ward inpatients: days since last bowel motion, laxatives prescribed, bowel chart and ward round documentation, episodes of diarrhoea
- One episode of **diarrhoea** was defined as **3 motions of type 6 or type 7 stool in 24 hours**
- A **new intervention** was introduced every two weeks over a total of 8 weeks

## Interventions

1. **Recording bowel motions** at the daily ‘Board Round’ Multi-Disciplinary Meeting.
2. Ward staff **education** sessions
3. **Footstools** for use with commodes and toilets
4. **High-fibre foods** to patients with constipation.

## Results



**Rate of constipation** was successfully **reduced**, with 100% patients moving bowels every 2 days from a baseline of 68%.

Bowel chart documentation **improved** from 33.3% to 92.9%.  
Ward round documentation **improved** from 41.3% to 100%.

Laxative prescriptions **increased** from 50% to 78.6%, with no increase in episodes of diarrhoea.

## Conclusions

**Constipation improved with our interventions**, but was accompanied by increased laxative prescriptions.

**Our next steps** will be optimise our conservative measures to reduce laxative prescriptions, and to this end we are developing high-fibre snack boxes to aid constipation in elderly patients.

