

## ***Patient Safety Learning Advisory***

### ***Aspiration resulting in death***

#### **Summary:**

A personal care home resident choked while eating supper. Suction was used to remove pieces of food obstructing the airway. The resident was provided with the correct diet based on current assessments. Limited medical assessment and intervention occurred following the choking episode.

The resident's condition deteriorated through the evening. The resident passed away ten hours following the event.

#### **Keywords: (choke, choking, aspiration)**

This review is based on a single event.

#### **Findings of the Review:**

Following the choking episode, the resident displayed signs of aspiration including audible wheezing respirations, coarse crackles in right lobe, epigastric pain and coughing up phlegm.

The physician was not contacted in a timely manner with the clinical findings. .

The signs and symptoms of clinical deterioration were not recognized.

Vital signs were documented in the progress notes, rather than on the vital signs record.

Provincially, the National Early Warning Score (NEWS) tool is being considered to assist in the recognition of a deteriorating patient and sepsis management. Early detection, timeliness and competency of clinical response are a triad of determinants of clinical outcome in people with acute illness. The use of this tool may have assisted staff in earlier recognition of the resident's deterioration.

#### **System Learning:**

Facilitate evidence based best practice education for nursing staff regarding the recognition of signs and symptoms of aspiration and the need for timely transfer/evaluation by a physician.

Form a multi-disciplinary working group to implement the provincial framework for National Early Warning Score (NEWS) and Pediatric Early Warning Score (PEWS) to standardize the early recognition of a deteriorating client.

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