

Development and implementation of the Victorian Children’s Tool for Observation and Response (ViCTOR)

Best practice stipulates that patient observation charts should identify thresholds for vital signs (such as respiratory rate) and incorporate a ‘track and trigger’ system to escalate care when deterioration occurs (Australian Commission for Safety and Quality in Health Care, 2011). The Australian Commission for Safety and Quality in Health Care (ACSQHC) developed a suite of standardised observation and response charts for adult patients; however, there were no plans to develop national charts for paediatric or newborn patients.

In Victoria, lack of consistency in the parameters for identifying deterioration, and lack of consistency in design and format of paediatric observation charts, highlighted the need for a standardised statewide approach.

Since 2013, the Victorian government has funded the Victorian Children’s Tool for Observation and Response (ViCTOR) projects. Following sector-wide engagement and drawing on the most recent evidence of respiratory rate and heart rate percentiles for hospitalised children, a set of standardised charts was developed, incorporating age-related vital signs and other clinical observations for children across five age groups. Initially piloted in 12 hospitals and following a multi method evaluation including chart audits, user surveys and focus groups the charts were released for statewide use late 2014.

A subsequent project evaluating the ViCTOR charts suitability for smaller rural health services resulted in the release of a set of ‘ViCTOR Urgent Care’ charts in late 2015. A series of Back to Basics (B2B) videos were also developed demonstrating how to conduct vital signs in children aged 0 – 18 years. To date, more than 70 Victorian health services, both public and private, are using the ViCTOR suite of charts.

On the back of ViCTOR’s success the maternity and newborn sector recognised the need for a similar standardised approach to recognition and response to deteriorating newborns. Two newborn charts were developed and piloted to meet the needs of two main groups of patients: ‘ViCTOR Birth Suite/Postnatal’ for use in all newly delivered babies and ‘ViCTOR Special Care Nursery’ for use in the special care nursery environment. These charts have recently been released for statewide use.

The ultimate goal of the ViCTOR charts and associated escalation of care processes is to provide timely medical care to any deteriorating patient and so eliminate unexpected but preventable mortality, cardiac arrest and other life-threatening events. We are now about to commence an evaluation of the clinical impact that ViCTOR has on quality and safety outcomes.

Further details about the ViCTOR work and resources can be found:

<https://www.victor.org.au/>