

Improving the time taken to release deceased bodies to bereaved families

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Background

Collection of the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD) is the final act that families remember of the care provided in ELHT. Regardless of how good the care of their relative as an inpatient was or how understanding the staff were during the last moments, without a timely MCCD, they are left with the impression that we do not care about them in these difficult times. In addition to providing a better service, advantages to the Trust included reducing potential complaints.

- After identifying this issue, a baseline audit was carried out in April 2016. It confirmed delays in the release of the MCCD and Cremation forms. This in turn led to delays in families being able to register deaths and making funeral arrangements.
- The audit results were presented to the Clinical Directors Forum, where it was agreed that the standard needed to be improved, hence this project.

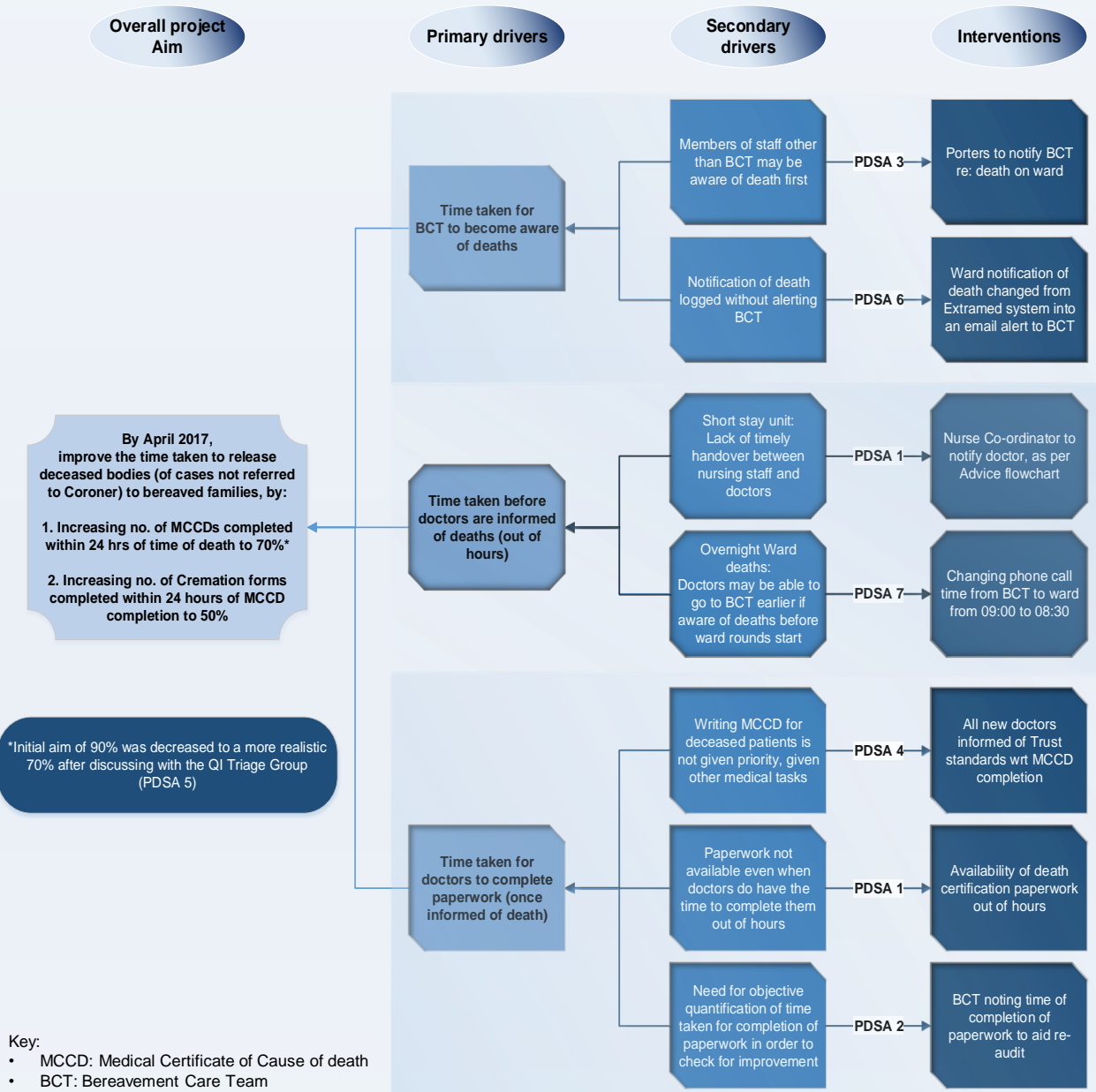
SMART Aims:

1. 70% of families (of cases not referred to the Coroner) will receive the MCCD within 24 hours of time of death
2. 50% of cases (not referred to the Coroner) will have the Part 2 of the Cremation form completed within 24 hours of the MCCD (when required)

Methods

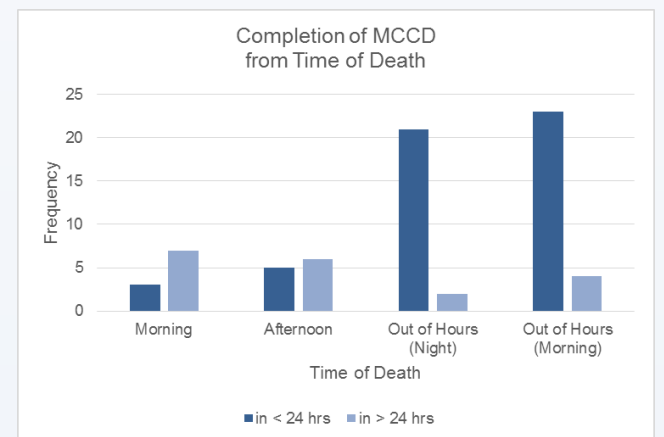
- The process from the time of death up to the delivery of the MCCD and cremation forms (when required) to the bereaved family was examined to identify where time could be saved
- Changes were implemented, as shown in the diagram below, and data (about deaths on both wards and short stay units) was gathered over more than 6 months, with help from the Bereavement Care Team (BCT)
- To minimise bias, cases were selected using a systematic sampling method, and analysed after excluding cases referred to the coroner for further investigation

Driver Diagram & Interventions



Results (Measures)

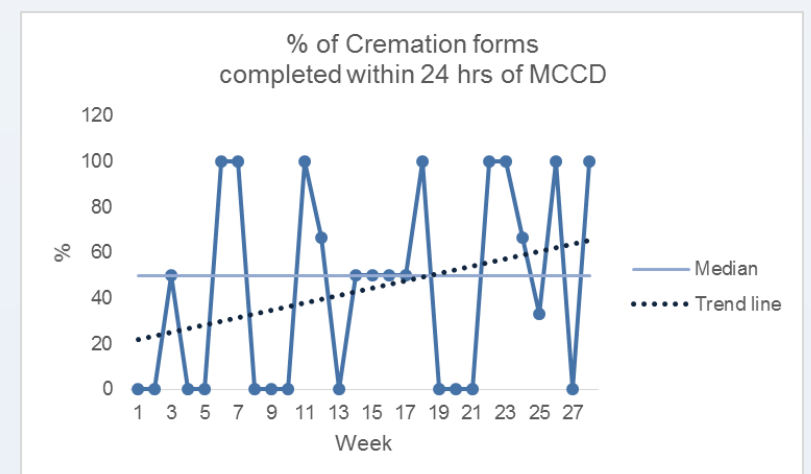
1. 73.2% of families (of cases not referred to the Coroner) received the MCCD within 24 hours of time of death



Interestingly, as shown above, families were more likely to wait more than 24 hours to receive the MCCD if the death happened within working hours

More MCCDs were completed in the time bracket of 12:30 to 14:00, followed by 08:00 to 11:00

2. 51.8% of cases (not referred to the Coroner) had the Part 2 of the Cremation form completed within 24 hours of MCCD



Sustainability

In this project, different interventions were implemented to address the issue at different levels (especially with respect to human, task and team factors).

As a new cohort of junior doctors start every year in August, PDSA 4 (i.e. informing doctors of the need for timely completion of paperwork) is a task to be repeated yearly.

PDSAs 1, 6 & 7 are changes in the system likely to continue. Even though they may not be sufficient on their own, they provide an additive effect likely to sustain the improvement.

In order to confirm its sustainability, further data will be analysed in 6 months.

