Improving Nursing Competence in Identifying and Providing Care to the Delirious Patient in a Small Community Hospital

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Introduction and Background

Delirium is a significant patient problem which can prolong patients' length of stay, result in long-term cognitive dysfunction, and higher mortality. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality recommends the following: the use of standardized instruments for assessing cognition and the presence of delirium, along with delirium risk factor assessment, prevention, and treatment. Delirious patients have higher healthcare costs, typically $16,303 to $64,421 per patient, which annually increases the healthcare system burden by approximately $38 billion to $152 billion. Besides the financial impact, for each day a patient remains delirious, there is a 20% increased risk of remaining in the hospital, and a 25-35% increased risk of neuropsychological deficit. Approximately one-third of all patient related delirium episodes are preventable.

Methods

Winchester Hospital Nursing Staff Education department recently chose a delirium assessment scale (Nu-DESC), but they had yet to implement it. This tool was chosen for Winchester Hospital because it is a quick, easy tool to use which takes very little time and has a high reliability and sensitivity. In addition to learning how to use the tool, Winchester Hospital nurses had not received any formal training in delirium assessment, prevention or treatment. This capstone service learning project was intended to create a nursing delirium annual competency HealthStream module. The HealthStream module is an overview of delirium and includes the chosen delirium assessment scale. The 48 slide PowerPoint HealthStream includes a ten question, multiple-choice exam prior to and after viewing the HealthStream module to measure learning.

Results:

A passing test score of 80% was established. In addition, Clinical Nurse Specialists will monitor whether security codes and restraint use decreases. Also, Clinical Nurse Specialists will perform chart reviews for nursing delirium interventions based on delirium screening results.

Discussion:

The educational goal for this project was for staff nurses to be more knowledgeable in assessing, identifying and formulating a plan of care for delirious patients after completion of HealthStream module. As we are early in the project outcomes of the project are not yet available. Our poster will display the assessment tools we use as well as screen shots from the learning module.

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