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PATIENT ACTIVITY CART (PAC) FOR BETTER CARE

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PROBLEM: Nursing staff was challenged in their efforts to provide care to patients experiencing cognitive impairment, including delirium.

SOLUTION: A Patient Activity Cart (PAC) that provides cognitively impaired patients with diversion and comfort. The PAC was incorporated into a multi-faceted delirium protocol that included a delirium order set, educational program for staff, and communication processes.

Problem Identified A survey at a large NICHE acute-care hospital revealed that the nursing staff had difficulty caring for older adult patients dealing with cognitive impairment. Follow-up to the survey further indicated that this was an obstacle to their providing care.



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Solution Formulated Recognizing the need to upgrade the quality of care for older adult patients, and drawing from NICHE best practices and models, the hospital's interdisciplinary NICHE team created an educational component and utilized a poster series. The posters detailed activity interventions for confusion/delirium using a "David Letterman Top Ten" approach. The interventions required equipment which was supplied in a Patient Activity Cart (PAC). The PACs are mobile resources, stocked with items designed to support intervention efforts including puzzles, sewing cards, peg boards, Slinkys, Koosh balls, and activity aprons. Carts are provided to every adult inpatient unit in the hospital. Many items are disposable, single-use. Nursing staff are responsible for cleaning the washable items after each patient use. Washing instructions are included for the activity apron.

To close the loop, rounding education took place when the carts were restocked and the Patient Activity Cart concept was written into the hospital's policies and guidelines for patient care.

NICHE ROLE The NICHE Geriatric Resource Nurse (GRN) Core Curriculum recognizes the significant effects of delirium on older adult patients, their families, and the health care system. During hospitalization, the nurse is in a unique position to screen for delirium as well as develop interdisciplinary care plans to address them. The GRN curriculum module on "Depression, Delirium and Dementia" details specific identification, assessment and nursing strategies for dealing with delirium.

Evaluation/Results A re-survey of the nursing staff after the implementation of the program revealed a 21.79% improvement in attitude concerning support for the care of the older adult patients. It was clear that providing nursing staff with tools and support to help them care for patients with confusion/delirium improved staff satisfaction and decreased stress levels.

For more information

1. Buettner, L., Kolanowski, A., & Yu, F. (2007). Recreational games: Simple and effective cognitive stimulation programs for residents with dementia in long-term care settings. *American Journal of Recreation Therapy*, 6(1), 25-30.
2. Glantz, C. & Richman, N. (2007). Occupation-based ability centered care for people with dementia. *OT Practice*, 10-16.
3. Greenwood, D., Loewenthal, D., & Rose, T. (2001). A relational approach to providing care for a person suffering from dementia. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 36(4), 583-590.

NICHE-related resources

1. Conedera, F. & Mitchell, L. (2007). *Try This, Dementia Series D4* Therapeutic Activity Kits, available at http://consultgerirn.org/uploads/File/trythis/try_this_d3.pdf
2. Fletcher, K. DEMENTIA Nursing Standard of Practice Protocol: Recognition and Management of Dementia. consultgeriRN website. Available at: http://consultgerirn.org/topics/dementia/want_to_know_more
3. Tullmann, D.F., Mion, L. C., Fletcher, K.F., Foreman, M.D. DELIRIUM: Nursing Standard of Practice Protocol: Delirium: Prevention, Early Recognition, and Treatment. consultgeriRN website. Available at: http://consultgerirn.org/topics/delirium/want_to_know_more
4. The GRN Core Curriculum. Depression, Delirium and Dementia. <http://elearningcenter.nicheprogram.org/course/view.php?id=2&page=8>
5. Gero Patient Care Associate (GPCA) Curriculum. <http://elearningcenter.nicheprogram.org/course/view.php?id=28>

About NICHE

NICHE (Nurses Improving Care for Healthsystem Elders) is an international program designed to help hospitals and healthcare organizations improve care of older adults. The vision of NICHE is for all patients 65-and-over to be given sensitive and exemplary care. The mission of NICHE is to provide principles and tools to stimulate a change in the culture of healthcare facilities to achieve patient-centered care for older adults. NICHE, based at NYU College of Nursing, consists of hospitals and healthcare facilities in the U.S., Canada and Bermuda. For more information visit nicheprogram.org.

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