Creation of a Therapeutic Activity Program (TAP) for Patients with Dementia across Settings

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ABSTRACT

The Alzheimer’s Association reports that 15.2 million Americans now have some form of dementia and the numbers are growing. Dementia patients are often unengaged in acute care settings and frequently develop a superimposed delirium when ill or during transition. The members of the Regional NICHE Steering team based at Riverside Doctors’ Hospital/Williamsburg began exploring an approach to promote patient engagement and safety through development of a Therapeutic Activity Program (TAP). Dementia patients function best when exposed to activities that prevent over or under stimulation through controlled cognitive, sensory, or tactile experiences. Development of a TAP was a collaboration of patients, nursing and volunteers. The purpose of the TAP is to keep patients occupied and engaged in their surroundings. Literature supports the use of activity boxes for patients with dementia to help decrease agitation, sedatives or physical restraints when the patient becomes restless. What is unknown is if a structured TAP provided on a regular basis will help prevent disruptions and agitation episodes that sometimes result in the use of physical/chemical restraint.

OBJECTIVES

Hiring staff and volunteers on the BHU steering committee 1) reviewed the literature on use of therapeutic activities in lieu of using pharmacological or restraints, 2) provided education on dementia for nursing and volunteer staff, 3) developed a policy and procedure on use of the TAP, 4) assembled a box of reusable, infection-control friendly materials that provide stimulation without being detrimental, 5) defined a plan to measure outcomes on patient care, impact to quality of care, and patient and staff/worker satisfaction. The programs will be evaluated to determine if the TAP is effective in decreasing agitation, sedative or physical restraints when the patient becomes restless. What is unknown is if a structured TAP provided on a regular basis will help prevent disruptions and agitation episodes that sometimes result in the use of physical/chemical restraint.

GOALS & MEASURES

PATIENT

Goal: To reduce or eliminate frustration, agitation, and anxiety during patient stay by use of diversional activities employed and decrease the use of or need for medications or restraints.

Measures:
1. Staff and the organization will monitor and trend the use of the diversional activities, medications, and restraints to ensure that evidence-based, safe, high-quality health care is consistently being provided to our patients.
2. Monitor and trend satisfaction of patient and family as well as staff, with the use of the diversional activity box.

STAFF

Goal: To provide current evidence based care alternative to patients in order to decrease agitation, medications and restraints/treatments/restrictions in those diagnosed with dementia. We want the patient to feel comfortable with medications and we respect their right into care decisions.

Measures:
1. Monitor staff satisfaction and satisfaction in the utilization of the diversional activity box as part of routine patient care.

ORGANIZATION

Goal: To establish a safe and therapeutic environment for older adult to facilitate their ability to maintain and to improve their current level of cognition and overall wellness.

Measures (facilitating):
1. Monitor use of activities and ensure their familiarity with use of diversional activity box.
2. Monitor patient/family/staff satisfaction regarding utilization of diversional activity box as an alternative to medications and restraints.
3. Provide visibility and support for NICHE program and its components implementation such as awareness and monitoring of diversional activity box.
4. Provide oversight of the use of medications identified as for caution use for older adults based on current NBM/C criteria.

Measures (regulatory):
1. Joint Commission/NICHE crosswalk identifies Joint Commission standards in the areas of leadership, human resources, promotion of care, environment of care, performance improvement, information management, nursing, medication management, and rights and responsibilities of the patient.

FUTURE PLANS

For a patient with dementia, any disruption to a normal routine can be very stress producing. This stress added to an illness or injury and admission to the hospital can be devastating. Studies have shown that increased cognitive stimulation and human interaction are vital to well-being while declining sensory and cognitive functions coupled with decline, boredom, fear and loneliness can respectively effect wellbeing. It is our goal here at Riverside Doctors’ Hospital Williamsburg to create and implement a Diversional Activity Protocol/Pathway that would include physicians orders for an individualized plan of activity for not only our dementia patients, but for any patient that would benefit from any of our therapeutic activities. We will develop a pathway of activity that includes an initial assessment, an individualized care plan, Staff/Family and patient education, implementation of care plan, evaluation of care plan, and ongoing evaluation of the care provided. This pathway will link patient care with family care and community quality of life. We also hope to promote patient and staff satisfaction, positive outcomes. We look forward to further data collection and publication of the results of our new protocol/pathway.

RESOURCES