A Hospital Uses NICHE Materials to Promote Patient, Associate, Family and Community Engagement
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Methods / Approach

STAFF ENGAGEMENT

- GRN meetings have a monthly topic for GRNs to bring back to their units. Examples are sleep hygiene, progressive mobilization, restraint alternatives, fall precautions, delirium and dementia communication techniques.
- Sitter classes, taught by NICHE, are required to work as a sitter.
- NICHE coordinator works 1:1 with sitters to train dementia communication techniques, sleep hygiene and safety.
- NICHE led an ANCC Gerontological Certification class utilizing NICHE modules.
- GRN certification and involvement in the NICHE GRN program are points on our career progression program for nurses.
- Staff recognition through the NICHE program involves thank you notes, recognition in the hospital newsletter, letters to senior management and nominations for hospital awards.

FAMILY/COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- We started an Alzheimer/Dementia Caregiver Support Group this year. It is led by a Geriatric Social Worker and the NICHE Coordinator and is open to families and community members at no cost.
- The NICHE Coordinator interacts with families on rounds to educate on their family member’s care needs and provide resource materials.
- Community Events by NICHE include Dementia Communication, Senior Fair, Assisted Living Presentation and the Walk to End ALZ.
- Developmentally disabled student programs make the paper flowers for the Art Cart as a workshop project.
- Approval to teach an EMS course on dementia care in emergency situations is pending by the state.
- FRIENDLY VISITORS are volunteers who visit older adult patients to chat and reminisce.
- Patients are visited by the Art Cart staffed by a volunteer who brings magazines, stress relieving, coloring pages, puzzles, magnifiers and paper flowers to the patient’s room.
- The NICHE Coordinator rounds on patients with sitters and elder patients referred by staff nurses, case manager or therapists. Patients can be those with a new diagnosis of dementia, behavioral issues, or other geriatric needs.
- The NICHE program is a driver of restraint reduction in the hospital.
- GRNs educate patients and families on mobilization and sleep hygiene, therapeutic communication and safety.

Results

- Two RNs and one CNA were nominated for the top hospital award for geriatric sensitive care.
- Twelve RNs completed the Geriatric Certification review class.
- A sitter used therapeutic communication to calm an agitated patient who had been combative and restrained. The patient and her family were thrilled and the story was written up and passed along to all hospital safety committees in the system.
- A delirium patient was able to go to a SNF and, eventually, home after an extended hospital stay. His nurses practiced NICHE led delirium interventions to help him progress toward discharge.
- A serious medication/transition problem was discovered in NICHE rounds and serious harm to the patient was prevented.
- The NICHE program is a driver of restraint reduction in the hospital. Restraint usage has drastically declined.
- GRNs educate patients and families on mobilization and sleep hygiene, therapeutic communication and safety.

Discussion/Conclusions

- Sixty percent of the inpatient population at South Suburban Hospital is over the age of 65.
- The NICHE program has impacted the care of elder patients at South Suburban Hospital. Future opportunities are to gather data on outcomes related to geriatric outcomes.
- Leadership support of NICHE is vital in engaging staff.
- NICHE program modules are used to train staff in elder care and provide an opportunity for career progression through certification.
- Family support is important in dementia care. Caregivers have a resource in the ALZ/Dementia support group.

Implications for Practice

- An active NICHE program engages staff with education, opportunities for career advancement and recognition.
- An active NICHE program engages families and the community with education and support.
- An active NICHE program engages patients with emphasis on creating a safe and friendly environment.

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References

www.nicheprogram.org