THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ADDRESSING UPPER BODY WARMTH WITH OLDER ADULT PATIENTS

Author: Sue E. Durkin, MSN, CCRN, CCNS, Geriatrics Advanced Practice Nurse

Advocate Good Samaritan Hospital, Downers Grove, Illinois

PROBLEM: Lower patient satisfaction scores from individuals over age 65 and particularly for those over age 80 were noted on patient surveys. Sleep problems, wandering and frequent toileting were observed.

SOLUTION: Provide a “Comfort Shawl” to address comfort needs, prevent adverse safety events and improve patient satisfaction.

Problem Identified Comfort is associated with contentment and synonymous with calmness and well-being. While healthcare providers view comfort as a high priority, patient perception is sometimes the opposite. Advocate Good Samaritan Hospital noted lower satisfaction scores among older adult patients, particularly among females. Top deciles patient satisfaction is a primary objective for healthcare organizations. Decreasing adverse events, such as falls, and promoting sleep in elders was a priority.
Nurses Improving Care for Healthsystem Elders

Solution Formulated Meeting basic comfort needs can improve mood, happiness and satisfaction. A nurse-driven pilot program started in late 2011 used the simple intervention of providing patients with a “Comfort Shawl” to address comfort needs, prevent adverse safety events and improve patient satisfaction. The “Comfort Shawl” also sends a subliminal message to patients: “We care about your health and comfort.” Identifying basic comfort needs supports optimum performance in a treatment program. This premise was based on the concepts of Katherine Kolcaba’s “Comfort Theory,” the hospital’s nursing theorist’s model.

Patient gowns are often too large and ill fitting, not warm and provide insufficient cover. Providing a “Comfort Shawl” for older adult patients to help cover their upper body for warmth and privacy supports a holistic concept of care. Research shows that patients sleep better, wander less and have less need for toileting when they are sleeping comfortably.

The Pilot

- One hundred shawls were used for the initial pilot. Because of this limited supply of shawls, nurses identified patients over age 80 experiencing pain or agitation who could benefit from increased comfort.
- “One person use” shawl is sent home with the patient
- Nurses completed a survey tool, developed for the pilot, documenting the patients’ reactions and comfort results, for instance if using the shawl promoted sleep and thus helped decrease falls due to less agitation at night
- Discharge callback queries patients about the shawls and their satisfaction with them

NICHE Role The NICHE Geriatric Resource Nurse (GRN) core curriculum is designed for use by those at NICHE sites who train nurses in best practices for hospitalized older adults. GRNs are the foundation of system-wide improvement to achieve positive outcomes for hospitalized older adults. The NICHE program, available to hospitals throughout North America, offers evidence-based, interdisciplinary approaches to promote improved care for the hospitalized older adult. GRNs can perform assessments similar to the one described in this Solution story to understand the characteristics of the older adults at their hospitals.

Evaluation/Results Nursing surveys revealed that 99% of patients expressed satisfaction with the shawl. Thirty percent of the nursing staff felt that the patients’ sleep was improved and 50% believed that the shawl could contribute to fall prevention.

For more information

5. NICHE Education Brief: The GRN’s Bedside Guide: Simple Environmental Modifications to Enhance Safety for Older Adults. (Available at NICHE Knowledge Center, accessed via www.nicheprogram.org.)

NICHE-related resources

5. NICHE Education Brief: The GRN’s Bedside Guide: Simple Environmental Modifications to Enhance Safety for Older Adults. (Available at NICHE Knowledge Center, accessed via www.nicheprogram.org.)

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.