THE “GREAT” KIT: ENHANCING GERIATRIC RESOURCES, EDUCATION, AND TOOLS IN THE EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT

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PROBLEM: Emergency Department (ED) nurses were challenged to assess and address the specialized needs of older adults. ED nurses historically have not received educational preparation in the care of the older adults and patient satisfaction surveys identified need for improvement.

SOLUTION: Multimodal geriatric educational program to improve the care of the acutely ill older adult in the ED.

Problem Identified According to the National Center for Health Statistics (2004), persons aged 75-years-and-older have the highest ED visit rate of any age group. Older adults comprise one third of the Meridian Health Ocean Medical Center ED admissions (over 13,000 patients annually). The Emergency Nurses Association (2003) has identified the need to improve nurse knowledge of geriatric changes and the influence of these changes on the older adult’s health and response to treatment.
Solution Formulated Multimodal geriatric educational programs have demonstrated effectiveness in improving the care of the acutely ill older adult in the ED (2008). Palemoe’s Facts about Aging Quiz (1998) was used to assess the knowledge of the Ocean Medical Center ED nursing staff and guide the development of the GREAT (Geriatric Resources, Education, and Tools) Kit. Geriatric focused resources provided to staff include the Try This Series and selected geriatric emergency articles, posted monthly. Educational programs focus on assessment of common geriatric syndromes, and management of frequently occurring emergency problems in the older adult. A tool kit supplies materials for nurses to provide diversion and comfort for patients (e.g., music, movies, books). (This project was supported by the Geriatric Nursing Leadership Academy, a program of Sigma Theta Tau International, and funded by the John A. Hartford Foundation.)

NICHE Role The NICHE Evidence-Based Geriatric Nursing Protocols for Best Practice were utilized to develop the ED curriculum. The tool kit is based on information found in Try This (#D4) “Therapeutic Activity Kits.” Nurses are provided with a copy of the protocol book as well as the Try This series.

Evaluation/Results The GREAT program has yielded improved patient satisfaction and improved satisfaction of the ED staff and clinical nurse specialist with age appropriate quality of care provided to older adults. Additionally, the program has facilitated the implementation of the Geriatric Clinical Scholar program (akin to the GRN program, peer geriatric experts) in the ED; three gerontological nurses certified in the ED; and an increase in the number of consultations between the ED nurses and both the geriatric clinical nurse specialist and ACE unit staff. (Research study results forthcoming.)

For more information

NICHE-related resources

About NICHE
NICHE (Nurses Improving Care for Healthsystem Elders) is an international program designed to help hospitals improve the 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 health care facilities to achieve patient-centered care for older adults. NICHE, based at NYU College of Nursing, comprises hospitals and health systems located in 46 states, Canada, and Bermuda. For more information visit nicheprogram.org.