Pain Improvement with Nursing Knowledge: Pain Education Program for Nurses

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Purpose

At Abington Memorial Hospital (AMH), a 660 bed acute care community teaching institution, patient satisfaction is very important. Press-Ganey surveys are sent to all discharged patients' looking at patients reported satisfaction with various aspects of their inpatient care. Historically, pain satisfaction survey results have been poor and one of the most common patient complaints. Members of the palliative care team, including the department medical director, nurse manager, nurse practitioner and pharmacist, in conjunction with the anesthesia-pain management clinical nurse specialist, developed a four hour nursing pain education program in order to increase nursing's understanding of pain management. The goal was to improve satisfaction outcomes related to pain management at AMH

Method

A pilot program was developed for a 60 bed medical surgical unit nursing staff. With nursing leadership support, four hours of mandatory pain management education was approved for each nurse assigned to the unit. Education was offered in sixteen separate sessions at different times of the day in order to accommodate all nursing shifts. An IRB approved study was developed utilizing a pre and post educational exam, followed by a staff survey evaluating increased confidence and knowledge of pain management interventions and overall satisfaction of the program. Longitudinal satisfaction data is continually observed to determine long term effectiveness with the program.

Results

Seventy seven nurses participated in the mandatory educational program. Two nurses were unable to participate due to family medical leave of absence. Pre and post test information was evaluated for areas of common knowledge, improvement of knowledge after the educational program was given, and future areas of focus where lack of knowledge remained despite education. The follow up employee survey showed increased reported self confidence in pain management knowledge and increased usage of the learned tools to help address patient complaints with physicians. Longitudinally, it was observed that pain scores have trended down while satisfaction scores have markedly improved on the piloted unit, while remaining static in the rest of the institution.

Conclusions

The pain management program offered to the nursing staff on a 60 bed medical surgical unit showed lower pain scores and increased patient satisfaction with regards to pain management. Equipping nursing with pain management knowledge gives nurses the tools and confidence to advocate appropriate pain management for their patients. Due to the positive results seen on the targeted unit, the pain management educational program has been approved to be delivered to nursing staff on the orthopedics floor. If these results are sustained, implementation of the program to the remainder of the nursing staff within the institution will be pursued.