

Nurses Improving Care for Healthsystem Elders

NICHE



NICHE SOLUTION #9 • 2010

ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL APPROACHES TO IMPROVE OUTCOMES FOR THE HOSPITALIZED OLDER ADULT

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PROBLEM: A combination of sensory challenges and co-morbidities often place the older adult at risk for a negative hospital experience and complications including falls and injuries.

SOLUTION: Coordinated environmental and social interventions to improve safety and patient satisfaction.

Problem Identified Care of the hospitalized older adult is complex. Older adults have a higher incidence of baseline vulnerabilities, including functional impairments, sensory challenges, and multiple chronic health problems. Additionally, the hospital environment may not accommodate age-related changes including those related to hearing, vision, and mobility. Consequently the older adult is predisposed to decreased satisfaction, delirium and functional decline, as well as falls and fall-related injuries.



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Solution Formulated The 28-bed, NICHE - Gerontology unit of Christ Hospital planned a series of environmental and social interventions to improve patient outcomes, specifically patient satisfaction, safety and falls. The interventions were identified by staff and champions helped with the implementation.

Environmental interventions included:

- Installation of signs reminding patients to call for assistance getting to the bathroom
- Coloring the call light to improve visibility
- Raising the toilet seat
- Fall risk and other key points in care identified on white boards

Also, use of an electronic medical record with computer physician order entry and bar code medication administration was implemented.

Social interventions included:

- Including the patient and family on daily rounds
- Intensive volunteer involvement with patients
- Implementation of the SBAR (Situation, Background, Assessment, and Recommendation) method of standardizing communication

NICHE ROLE NICHE GRN Core Curriculum identifies nurses as the essential team members who can provide leadership during the development and implementation of programs to reduce falls, increase safety and improve patient satisfaction. Nurses can provide individualized patient assessment and reassessment, manage environmental safety issues, and develop and implement comprehensive plans of care. The NICHE program, available to hospitals throughout North America, offers evidence-based, interdisciplinary approaches to promote positive outcomes and experiences for the hospitalized older adult.

Evaluation/Results Over a twelve-month period, the Press Ganey patient satisfaction scores increased from 82% to 86%. There was an 84-day period of time without any falls. Overall, the incidence of falls decreased by 25%. The coordinated interventions program stimulated overall improvement of outcomes on the unit. All members of the nursing staff were involved and accepted the challenge of finding other smaller approaches that, when combined with the program efforts, improved patient safety.

For more information

1. Hart, B., Birkas, J., Lachmann, M., & Saunders, L. (2002). Promoting positive outcomes for elderly persons in the hospital: Prevention and risk factor modification. *AACN Clinical Issues*, 13(1), 22-33.
2. Thornlow, D.K., Anderson, R., & Oddone, E. (2009). Cascade iatrogenesis: factors leading to the development of adverse events in hospitalized older adults. *Int J Nurs Studies*, 46 (11):1528-35.

NICHE-related resources

1. Calkins, M. NICHE webinar: "Hospital Designs to Support the Older Patient," available at <http://www.nicheprogram.org/join-webinars>.
2. Flood, K. NICHE webinar: "Improving Medication Safety in Older Adults at the University of Alabama at Birmingham Hospital," available at http://www.nicheprogram.org/solutions_webinar_series.
3. Taylor, J. NICHE Clinical Improvement Model: Falls and Fall Related Injuries: Prevention and Management," available at <http://elearningcenter.nicheprogram.org/course/view.php?id=19&page=291>.

About NICHE

NICHE is a national organization designed to help health care professionals in hospitals improve the care of older adults. NICHE hospitals seek to create an environment where older adult patients receive care that results in better outcomes. This climate of success encourages patients and their families to seek NICHE designated hospitals for their medical needs. The NICHE Network now numbers nearly 300 hospitals throughout North America.

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