Nurses Improving Care for Healthsystem Elders

NICHE

NICHE SOLUTION #2 • 2010

COLLABORATING TO PROVIDE A BEST FRIENDS™ APPROACH TO HOSPITALIZED PATIENTS

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PROBLEM: Hospitalization is stressful for older adult patients and can lead to severe anxiety and increased cognitive impairment in patients with dementia.

SOLUTION: Social interaction and activity via the Best Friends™ Approach can allay anxiety and stress.

Problem Identified The occurrence of acute illness and subsequent hospitalization in an unfamiliar environment is stressful for older adults. Approximately 25% of hospitalized older adults also have dementia, many not diagnosed.

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Solution Formulated Providing respectful conversation, therapeutic listening and touch, and individualized activity interventions can allay anxiety and stress associated with hospitalization. The Best Friends™ Approach is a unique model in dementia care that is patient-centered. It incorporates current knowledge, strategies, and best practices to create a culture of excellence in dementia care.

To implement the Best Friends™ Approach, a collaboration was formed between Heritage Community of Kalamazoo, a long-term care facility trained and licensed to teach the Best Friends™ Approach, and the Bronson Methodist Hospital. Hospital Geriatric Resource Nurses (GRNs) and Volunteer Staff were then trained in the program.

NICHE Role Geriatric Resource Nurse (GRN) training — a central component of the NICHE program — recognizes the significant consequences of dementia for elder patients, their families, and the health care system. NICHE affirms the nurse is in a unique position to screen for this condition as well as develop interdisciplinary care plans to address it. When this condition is detected early, protocols can be implemented — such as the Best Friends™ Approach — to help patients and families cope successfully while preventing avoidable complications. 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 To evaluate the results of the training, volunteers were assigned to an acute care medical unit, staffed by GRNs, where they utilized approaches learned. Interventions most frequently practiced included companionship, conversation, listening, comfort measures, communication with RN and communication with patient care assistant. Volunteers reported satisfaction with the experience. This collaborative also entitled select Heritage Community RNs to participate in Bronson's Geriatric Nurse Education Resource Program run through NICHE.

Future plans include continuation of the collaborative effort benefiting patients and staff from both facilities.

For more information

1. KNACK™ Learning Framework. 2005. Alzheimer Society of Calgary. Available at http://www.alzheimercalgary.com/alzheimercalgary/information-request-form. Accessed March 30, 2010.
2. Bell, V., Troxel, D., 2001. *The Best Friends Staff: Building a Culture of Care in Alzheimer's Programs*. Maryland: Baltimore: Health Professions Press, Inc.
3. Best Friends™ Approach website: www.bestfriendsapproach.com.

NICHE-related resources

1. NICHE Geriatric Resource Nurse Core Curriculum, Chapter 4-7 Cognition: Depression, Delirium, Dementia (http://nicheprogram.org/knowledge_center)
2. NICHE Geriatric Patient Care Associate Core Curriculum: *What Are Your Patient's Comfort Needs*?, *Is Your Patient Confused*?
3. NICHE Clinical Improvement Model: Restraint Reduction Program (http://nicheprogram.org/knowledge_center)
4. Fetcher, K. *Dementia: Nursing Standard of Practice Protocol: Recognition and Management of Dementia*. Available at http://consultgerirn.org/topics/dementia/want_to_know_more
5. Try This: Therapeutic Activity Kits. Available at http://consultgerrn.org/uploads/File/trythis/theraAct.pdf

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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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