

Project Title

A Novel Communication Toolkit in Improving Communication between Intubated patients and Healthcare workers (HCWs)

Project Lead and Members

Tan Ee Chen Jaclyn

Organisation(s) Involved

Tan Tock Seng Hospital

Project Period

Start date: Mar-2016

Completed date: Sept-2016

Aims

- The purpose of this study was to determine the causes of ineffective communication between HCW and ICU patients.
- The aim was to reduce the number of communication attempts these patients took to get their intent (defined as basic needs) understood from 5 to 2 within 6 months.

Background

- The HCW are challenged to meet the ICU patients' communication needs as these patients have artificial airways and cannot communicate verbally.
- The HCW are markedly dissatisfied with their ability to communicate effectively and patients experience high levels of anxiety and frustration.

Methods

- The project was carried out in the surgical ICU in Tan Tock Seng Hospital.

- Using the Clinical Practice Improvement methodology, the most significant root causes were HCW's lack of awareness in communication and inadequate communication tools.
- The communication tools were redesigned and tips on selecting the appropriate communication method were shared.
- These interventions were put on trial in Plan-Do-Study-Act cycles before introducing them in sequence.

Results

- The process of a patient-initiated communication has changed and HCW-patient communication is more effective.
- Clinical: The number of communication attempts took by the surgical ICU patients to get their intent understood was reduced from 5 to 2 within 6 months.

- Experience: (Staff / Patient):

The patients rated the usefulness of the communication kit on a 5-point smiley face scale (1-Excellent, 2- Good, 3- Average, 4- Poor, 5- Very Poor) after each HCW-patient communication. On average, they rated the communication kit as 2-Good.

- Savings:

It would cost at least \$50SGD to have a communication kit prescribed by a ST. During the 6-month study, there was an average of 13 ICU patients/month. This will translate into 156 ICU patients/year. Therefore, the total cost savings will be \$7800/year.

- The interventions implemented have helped each staff nurse to communicate more effectively. It has helped them to save 20 minutes from each patient. Therefore, with 156 ICU patients, the total time savings will be 52 hours/year.

Lessons Learnt

- Getting data collection and monitoring systems right were tough.
- Regular discussions, detailed planning and constant engagement of the team members and ground staff were keys to the success of the project.

Conclusion

Adequate communication tools and providing tips to guide HCWs in identifying appropriate communication strategies are essential for achieving effective HCW-patient communication.

Additional Information

- NHG Quality Day 2017- Merit Award
- TTSH Quality Improvement Project Competition 2017 (Quality Day) - Outstanding Award
- Kaizen Festival (KTPH) - Speaker

Project Category

Care Redesign, Quality Improvement

Keywords

Care Redesign, Quality Improvement, Patient-Centred Care, Communication Effectiveness, Tan Tock Seng Hospital, Allied Health, Nursing, Physiotherapy, Speech Therapy, Clinical Practice Improvement Programme, Plan-Do-Study-Act, Quality Improvement Methodology, Critical Care, Intensive Care Unit, Intubated Patients, Communications Toolkit, Cost Saving, Patient Experience, Staff Satisfaction

Name and Email of Project Contact Person(s)

Name: Tan Ee Chen Jaclyn, Senior Physiotherapist, Tan Tock Seng Hospital

Email: ee_chen_tan@ttsh.com.sg