The Road to Recovery: Supporting Patients and Caregivers in the Pediatric ICU

With Best Practices for Acquired Brain Injury Education

University of Pittsburgh, Department of Occupational Therapy
*Doctor of Occupational Therapy Student

INTRODUCTION

Each year pediatric acquired brain injuries (ABIs) result in over 500,000 Emergency Department visits and 60,000 hospitalizations in the US. A study found that the readiness scores for online educational materials for brain injuries and epilepsy failed to meet the recommended levels and are below the US average fifth grade reading level. In coordination with the UPMC Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh (CHP) Rehabilitation staff, we identified the need to develop an evidence-based approach for the delivery of education to caregivers of children with ABIs. The average readability score for our materials was higher due to the “Commonly Used Phrases” document being an outlier (12.4 grade level), because it serves as a medical dictionary.

METHODS

To create a tangible staff and caregiver education materials regarding strategies to promote the knowledge of environmental modifications, cognitive/behavioral changes, phases of recovery, and family support, the project focused on developing staff and caregiver education materials. The materials received high satisfaction scores from the staff and caregivers.

RESULTS

Survey Results:
- 100% of the participating rehab therapists (n=11) responded to pre- and post-surveys
- 100% of therapists were mostly/completely satisfied with materials developed
- 70% increase in staff satisfaction with caregiver education after material development
- There was a 70% increase in overall staff satisfaction.
- Staff confidence increased by 77.5%
- Perceived caregiver understanding increased by 50%.

DISCUSSION

General Findings:
- Of the 11 participants, 9 were able to utilize the staff resource file: 11 found the caregiver education and staff resources to be helpful.
- There was a 70% increase in overall staff satisfaction.
- Staff confidence increased by 77.5%.
- Perceived caregiver understanding increased by 50%.

Health Literacy:
- Restricted access to UPMC Children’s servers to upload public virtual educational materials
- Lack of on-site observation of current patient education due to COVID-19-related restrictions
- Low enrollment rate of ABI patients decreased staff opportunity to utilize with caregivers.

CONCLUSIONS

General Conclusions:
- Occupational therapists are adept at structuring information and activities into easily managed pieces to encourage and maintain participation in everyday activities.
- Findings from this project demonstrated the need for occupational therapists to adopt skills to create standardized educational delivery, incorporating appropriate health literacy and evidence-based practice.
- Additionally, occupational therapists are collaborative experts and believe family and caregiver considerations are essential when caring for the patient.

Recommendations for Future Practice:
- Our findings demonstrate a need for client-centered, comprehensible education materials that are delivered in an organized manner to improve caregiver knowledge and confidence.
- Extending ABI caregiver and staff education material utilization beyond rehabilitation staff to other disciplines
- Brain injury support groups in PICU
- Staff as a resource for early-level practitioners

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank Kim Kubala, OTR, CTR, (coordinator of occupational therapy services), Jayne Keller, OTRL, and Danielle Silvestri, OTR, for supporting this doctoral capstone experience. We would also like to thank the CHP staff for reviewing our caregiver educational materials to ensure they are appropriate for their needs.

REFERENCES