Improving Staff-Patient Interaction to Prevent Adverse Behaviors in Patients with Dementia During Activities of Daily Living

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Introduction

Background

- Patients with dementia at Western Psychiatric Hospital – Integrated Health and Aging Program (WPH-IAHP) experience negative behaviors during activities of daily living (ADLs) when being assisted by staff. This impacts care and increases caregiver burden.
- Patients with dementia benefit from alternative communication strategies due to the physical and neurological changes that often come with disease progression (Morns et al., 2020). However, staff is not consistently trained in best practice dementia care.
- Using best practice communication skills can help reduce behaviors in patients with dementia making it easier for staff to assist with ADLs and promote independence in patients (Williams et al., 2018).

Significance

- Patients with dementia benefit from evidence-based best practice communication strategies.
- Training care staff to use these effectively will improve outcomes for patients and staff.

Implications for OT

- Occupational therapists are experts in all things functional with activities of daily living being one of the most frequently treated and billed areas of occupation. In order to best meet the needs of clients with dementia it is imperative that current evidence-based communication strategies are used during treatments to achieve the best patient outcomes. Introducing this program to care staff at IHAP shows that the available evidence can be taught and implemented in practice to increase staff comfortability and reduce adverse behaviors in patients with dementia which can help aid occupational therapists in their practice.

Objectives

1. Create and implement educational training sessions to enhance staff knowledge of communication strategies for patients with dementia.
2. Implement strategies for dementia care to promote meaningful participation of patients with dementia during ADL tasks and reduce adverse patient behaviors.

Methods

Participants

- Care staff working with patients with dementia at WPH-IAHP

Educational Training

- Synchronous educational training sessions focused on evidence-based communication strategies for staff
- Asynchronous educational training sessions focused on evidence-based communication strategies for staff unable to attend
- Hands on training to reinforce strategies

Outcomes Measures

- Staff comfortability
- Staff-patient communication

Assessments

- Pre- and Post- surveys measuring staff comfort when working with patients with dementia
- Behavior observations
- Communication strategy checklist

- Communication strategies poster for nurse stations
- Pocket Communication strategies card

Results

Adverse Behaviors During ADLs: Pre vs. Post Training

Pre-Survey

- Strongly Agree/Always
- Agree/Often
- Disagree/Rarely
- Strongly Disagree/Never

Post-Surveys

- Staff Survey Questions
- Posters
- Pocket cards
- Virtual training

Discussion

Findings

- Staff reported increased comfortability when providing care to patients with dementia after attending the training on best practice dementia care.
- Staff demonstrated increased use of communication skills when interacting with patients with dementia after the training presentation.
- When staff implemented increased use of best practice strategies, patients demonstrated a reduction in negative behavior during ADLs.

Limitations

- Patient population limited on unit
- Staff inconsistency

Future Directions

- Introduce best practice communication methods to staff for patients of other mental health conditions (mood disorders, schizoaffective disorder, etc.)

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Resources Provided to WPH-IAHP for Program Sustainability

- Unit Posters
  - Descriptive tips for interacting with patients with dementia
- Pocket Communication Strategy Card
  - Concise reminder of tips for interacting with patients in the moment
- Virtual Training
  - Power Point presentation with embedded audio

An example of the pocket communication strategy card is pictured to the left. The full-sized unit poster included similar information with more detail.

References

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