Children’s Hospital Awareness Initiative: Improving Employee Communication with Pediatrics

Sarah Hines
West Chester University of Pennsylvania

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The purpose of the Children’s Hospital Awareness Initiative is to identify and improve issues concerning staff interactions with pediatric patients and visitors. Some staff members may not feel confident in their ability to interact with children in a correct manner. It is our goal to compile and distribute educational materials to ensure positive interactions between all employees and children within the hospital network.

Appropriate communication and distraction techniques can infinitely improve the patient’s care experience. Providing positive reinforcements, such as rewards as opposed to consequences, may build trust between patient and provider. Distraction techniques may vary by age, such as blowing bubbles for infants or providing iPads for older children. Distractions that are interactive are shown to effectively reduce both pain and stress.

A survey was distributed to the over 12,000 employees of Lehigh Valley Health Network, yielding 2137 responses (18%). The survey included questions such as comfort level communicating with children, and knowledge level of distraction techniques. Each question was broken down into categories for different age groups, and options ranged from least, slightly, fairly, or most comfortable/knowledgeable. Responses were separated by clinical and non-clinical, as well as the department in which the responder worked. Inpatient pediatrics/adult, outpatient pediatrics/adult, and other were the options for departments. Observations in pediatric departments were also conducted.

Survey results indicated that employees in all areas of the hospital could benefit from formal education of proper communication techniques when approaching pediatric patients as well as visitors. Even employees in areas that are pediatric reported some difficulty with communication. The category of “Other” was largely units dealing with both pediatric and adult patients, and are the target for proper implementation of educational plans. Observations of units within the hospital verified data collected from the survey.

Child Life Specialists are working to compile educational materials to be formatted into a TLC for the next bundle. This mandatory, interactive learning tool will provide employees with proper and age-appropriate techniques to implement when working with children.

REFERENCES
