Violent Crimes in the Hospital Setting: Situational Awareness and Nursing Empowerment Result in Safety

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Lehigh Valley Health Network, Allentown, PA

“Do Not Announce-Violent Crime” (DNA-VC) Project:
A successful initiative utilizing evidence-based strategies to enhance situational awareness and ensure a safer hospital environment

Background
An increase in threats and violent acts by patients and visitors prompted staff from a 30-bed medical-surgical transitional trauma unit (TTU) to evaluate current practices.

Current State
- Pre-Implementation Staff Survey
  June 2013 (n=26): Over 74% of staff thought the process to identify a DNA-VC patient admitted to the unit was “unclear” or “very unclear.”
  CY2012 and 2013: Increasing number of employee injuries as a result of intentional patient assaults

Interprofessional Team
- Unit-based Nurse Leaders
- Clinical Nurses
- Attending physicians and extenders
- Case Manager
  Geriatrician
  Physical & Occupational Therapist
  Nutritionist
  Security Team

Goal: Determine how patients associated with violence are identified; managed from admission through discharge; and how safety is maintained at the bedside

Implementation Plan
1. Identification of Violent Crime Patients
   Categories:
   - Cases of penetrating trauma
   - Physical or sexual assault
   - Child abuse
   - Recipients of a threat
   - Those in witness protection

2. Interventions
   - Environmental safety enhancements
     - Emergency pull switches
     - Directional door locks
     - Signage
   - Badge system for non-employees on high risk units
   - Replacement of receptionists with security officers in high risk waiting rooms
   - Patients flagged in electronic health record (EHR) as DNA-VC

3. Standard Work
   - Environmental safety assessments
   - Enhanced communication
   - Education processes

Outcomes
- Post-Implementation Staff Survey
  July 2014 (n=25): 68% of staff thought the process to identify a DNA-VC patient admitted to the unit was “clear” or “very clear.”
- CY2014:
  Decreased Total Employee Injuries
  (caused by intentional assault by patient)

Lessons Learned
- A heightened sense of situational awareness prompts nurses to recognize elements possessing the potential for violence.
- Knowledge empowers nurses to initiate appropriate actions to maintain a safe environment for themselves, their patients and visitors.

REFERENCES:

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