Improving Nurse-Patient Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication Skills: ICU Patients with Neurological Communication Impairments

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Improving Nurse-Patient Verbal and Nonverbal Communication Skills: ICU Patients with Neurological Communication Impairments

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BACKGROUND

Studies have shown that the purpose of communication between the nurse and the patient is to influence the patient’s health and well-being. Communication difficulty with neurologically impaired individuals is associated with greater severity of illness and feelings of anger, frustration, panic, anxiety, and sleepiness. Nurses receive very little training in the areas of communication skills and augmentative alternative communication (AAC) skills (non-verbal cues, communication boards, etc.) to interact with such patients, even though research helps support that improving communication may improve clinical outcomes.

PICO QUESTION

In adult patients with neurological communication impairments, does enhanced nurse-patient communication skills improve the interpretation/documentation of patients’ observed, non-verbal, verbal and emotional states?

METHODS

Data was collected through a survey to nurses on NSICU
AAC workshop with NSICU nurses and speech language pathologist
Tips for communication handout
Emails sent to NSICU with communication application reminders
Monitor Epic documentation of communication enhancement options

RESULTS

Surveyed 18 NSICU nurses on day and night shift
78% never received AAC training
55% are most comfortable using verbal communication skills

● CONCLUSIONS

Strategies used to increase communication success:
• Know about Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)
• Have easy access to AAC equipment
• Have training on caring for patients with complex communication needs
• Ask family members or friends to help
• Collaborate with speech language pathology

Barriers/NEXT STEPS

• Provide AAC materials on the nursing unit while complying with copyright laws
• Increasing support and collaboration from speech language pathology
• Re-evaluating nurses’ responses to improved communication skills in 6 months
• Evaluate patient’s observed verbal and emotional state through CPOT scale
• Prevalence audits of charting by nurses to assure continued use of AAC

REFERENCES

