Caring for the Autistic Pediatric Population in the Emergency Department.

Teresa L. Pekarik BSN, RN
Lehigh Valley Health Network, teresa_l.pekarik@lvhn.org

Samantha B. Sheftel BSN, RN
Lehigh Valley Health Network, samantha_b.sheftel@lvhn.org

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarlyworks.lvhn.org/patient-care-services-nursing

Part of the Nursing Commons

Published In/Presented At
Caring for the Autistic Pediatric Population in the Emergency Department

Teresa Pekarik, BSN, RN
Samantha Sheftel, BSN, RN
Lehigh Valley Health Network, Allentown, Pennsylvania

BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

- Research shows that nurses feel unprepared and uneducated when caring for the autistic population. Nurses report an instrument to understand the patients needs would be beneficial in the acute care setting in the hopes of decreasing invasive care interventions (Zwaigenbaum, L., Nicholas, D., Muskat, B., Kilmer, C., Newton, A., Craig, W., & Sharon, R., 2016)
- Research also shows that lack of knowledge can hinder the care provided to this population
  - Recent data shows a 1 in 4 chance of this population requiring restraints or sedation during acute or emergency care due to lack of communication and knowledge of caring for a patient with this disorder (Venkat, A., Migyanka, J.M., Cramer, R., & McGonigle J.J., 2016)
  - Keys to success include understanding the core symptoms of impaired social interaction; problems with communication, and repetitive and stereotypical patterns of behavior; and how the acute care environment challenges those core symptoms (Scarpinato, N., Bradley, J., Kurbjun, K., Bateman, X., Holtzer, B., & Ely, B., 2010)

METHODS/IMPLEMENTATION

- Created a survey that screens nurses comfort level in regards to caring for the autistic pediatric population
- Obtained permission to use a behavioral tool titled “Instrument to Prepare for Acute Care of the Individual with Autism Spectrum Disorder in the Emergency Department” from an evidence based research article by Venkat, et al.
- Created a TLC presentation to educate the nursing staff on the significance of a behavioral tool and how to implement it in the ED
- Created a post survey that screens nursing comfort level after TLC education and utilizing education in the ED

RESULTS/OUTCOMES

Pre-survey results:

Post-survey results:

BARRIERS & CONCLUSION

Barriers:
- Time restriction
- Small volume of pediatric autistic patients in the ED
- Low number of survey responses
  - ED RNs: 20 completed the pre survey & 14 completed the post survey

Conclusion:

Pre-survey indications:
- RNs desire education to increase comfort when caring for the autistic pediatric population.
- A knowledge-deficit exists related to interventions to utilize when caring for a pediatric autistic patient.
- RNs feel a behavioral tool would be beneficial in the ED

Post survey indications:
- TLC education increased RN’s understanding of barriers and deficiencies faced in the ED with this population
- A behavioral assessment tool would be beneficial in the ED setting to aid in caring for the pediatric autistic population
- Continue to implement the tool in the ED

REFERENCES


Study: Higher rates of ED visits among children with autism point to need for greater training of ED staff, more comprehensive outpatient mental health care. (2013). ED Management, 25(2), 22-23


© 2014 Lehigh Valley Health Network