

Code Purple: Keeping our Memory Impaired Patients Safe

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Code Purple: Keeping Our Memory Impaired Patients Safe

Transitional Trauma Unit
Lehigh Valley Health Network, Allentown, Pa.

CODE PURPLE: An audio code designation alerting the organization to an elopement of a patient with a history of dementia.

BACKGROUND/EVIDENCE

- Three out of five persons with dementia will wander (Neubauer, et al., 2018).
- Strategies to improve care and safeguard patients with dementia include:
 - Screening for dementia
 - Assessing competency and capacity for decision making
 - Identifying and communicating with surrogate decision makers
 - Standardizing communication of patient's diagnosis with all staff (Pennsylvania Patient Safety Authority, 2016)
- Our academic 1,200 bed Magnet® facility had no standardized communication plan or formal response processes in place to address the potential for geriatric elopement.
- The design of Code Purple was triggered by evidence in the literature and facility addressing the risk of elopement in patients with dementia.



GOAL

- Design a plan to prevent elopement incidents in patients with a history of cognitive impairment.

METHODS/INTERVENTIONS

INITIATED JANUARY, 2016:

FORMED AN INTRAPROFESSIONAL TEAM

- Led by Network Security
- Included:
 - Nursing
 - Risk Management
 - Department of Geriatrics
 - Network Safety

IDENTIFIED THE PATIENT RISK FOR ELOPEMENT

- Based on provider documentation – one or more of the following:
 - Cognitive impairment
 - Alzheimer's
 - Dementia
 - Previous elopements
 - Memory impairment
- Attached a purple circle label on the patient's wrist band to alert hospital personnel



- Created and initiated use of a Code Purple Elopement Checklist (included the patient's photo)

DEFINED RESPONSIBILITIES

- Emergency Dispatcher (Security staff member)
- Nursing
- Emergency Communication Center

ACTIONS

- Notified Emergency Communications Center
- Placed an audio Code Purple announcement
- Searched and secured immediate area
- Informed designated hospital departments, local police, provider, and family

DOCUMENTATION

- Recorded the code event details and results in a progress note
 - Notification of the family/next of kin
 - Patient Safety Report

EDUCATION/TRAINING

- Initial eLearning module all clinical staff – February, 2017; Go-live date March, 2017.
- Mock Code Purple drills are performed regularly by the Emergency Management Committee.
- Staff are required to complete an education bundle annually.

EVENT REVIEW

- Unit leadership reviews event reports and identifies recommendations to prevent reoccurrences.
- Security develops an action plan for improvement and communicates findings, including recommendations, to the Patient Safety Council – membership includes:
 - Nursing
 - Risk management
 - Emergency management leadership



OUTCOMES

- There were 4 documented successful Code Purple events within the network.
- All Code Purple events within the network resulted in a timely location of the patient without injury indicating the effectiveness of the Code Purple Protocol.

KEY TAKE-AWAYS

- Elopement of patients with impaired memory cognition is a serious and potentially dangerous situation.
- Awareness of these consequences and a proactive response plan is critical for the safety of this population.



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