Examining Nurses' Knowledge and Attitudes About Pain Management Using an Online Survey

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Examing Nurses’ Knowledge and Attitudes About Pain Management, Using an Online Survey
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Methods:
The project was reviewed by the Network’s IRB and deemed to be QI.

Population and settings: The study population for the survey QI project was all registered and licensed practical nurses working on inpatient units in the Network’s three hospitals.

Designing the web-based survey: The survey was comprised of the 40-item Knowledge and Attitudes Survey (KAS), the 10-item Nurses’ Pain Management Questionnaire (Alley, 2001), and 10 demographic items. SelectSurvey version 4.01, an online software tool (CitrusApps.com, Overland Park, Kansas), was used to design the web-based survey.

Survey pilot testing: The survey was pilot tested with a separate group of nurses at LVHN who were not part of the final sample. The survey was revised based on pilot subjects’ feedback, resulting in the final survey. Average time expected to complete the final survey was 20 minutes.

Procedures: To maximize the visibility of and interest in the online nurse survey, the project team partnered with Network Nursing leadership to raise awareness of the study and encourage participation.

The Nurse leaders e-mailed their nursing staff members, explaining the survey’s purpose and how results would be used; they also assured staff that participants’ responses were 100% confidential and would not be shared among any group of nurses. Nurses were invited to participate through a link to the online survey.

During the survey collection period, the project coordinator sent updates to Nursing leadership regarding response rates of the units and answering survey-related questions. Nurses’ survey responses were captured in an Excel database. Data were analyzed in SPSS.

Results:
The survey was conducted during June through August, 2012.
The survey was distributed to 1763 Network nurses, of whom 675 completed the entire survey (response rate = 38%).

Conclusions:
Given nurses’ 24-hours a day presence in hospitals, nurses can be the most influential force in improving pain care and developing relevant policies to guide and improve healthcare providers’ clinical pain practices. Thus, we believe that learning about Network nurses’ pain management knowledge and attitudes is a key step toward identifying nurses’ educational needs, designing relevant, focused pain management programs, and determining how to make Network pain policy and clinical guidelines useful.

Overall, Network nurses’ survey responses indicate a fair level of baseline knowledge about general pain management topics. Pain education programs will be developed to reinforce general concepts and address in depth the pain care-related topics in improvements which are most needed, e.g., knowledge about the use of analogs and about pharmacology concepts, understanding state-of-the-art principles related to addiction and drug tolerance.

Our experience has demonstrated that obtaining current information about pain management-related knowledge and attitudes of in-duty nurses working in busy healthcare settings can be done efficiently and effectively using an online survey. After improving our survey processes, we plan to conduct similar surveys with other Network healthcare provider groups (e.g., pharmacists, physicians, etc.). Educational programs can then be tailored to the needs of the various provider groups.

The response rate of 38% is lower than we had expected, yet the online methodology was advantageous for several reasons, including:

- Quick, easy access to 1700 Network nurses, many of whom would have been challenging to reach using more traditional survey formats;
- The financial savings of using an electronic survey format.

There are many ways to improve the response rates for future surveys:

- Allow project team members to directly contact nurses in order to monitor and facilitate the completion of surveys in “real time”;
- Include more interaction between the project team and staff “RAMs,” and nursing leadership in the design, development, and implementation of the project and respond to respondents’ questions during the survey process;
- Consider providing incentives to reinforce the importance of obtaining responses from the survey recipients; and
- Improve the survey technology so that it allows for better access and improved ease of use, to overcome some of the barriers that respondents encountered in completing the survey in a timely manner.