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Crystal E. Crystal BSN, RN

Lehigh Valley Health Network, crystal_e.kilian@lvhn.org

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

Crystal Kilian BSN, RN

Lehigh Valley Health Network, Allentown, Pennsylvania



BACKGROUND

- Studies have shown that the purpose of communication between the nurse and the patient is to influence the patient's health and well-being³.
- Communication difficulty with neurologically impaired individuals is associated with greater severity of illness and feelings of anger, frustration, panic, anxiety, and sleepiness².
- 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 supports that improving communication may improve clinical outcomes².

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?

EVIDENCE

- Patients reported "voicelessness" influenced their critical care treatment creating feelings of regret and anxiety believing nurses need constant education¹.
- Some barriers to effective communication include time, acuity of patients, CAM score, GCS, and nurse/patient frustration^{2,3}.
- Increased support and collaboration from speech language pathology increases communication success and decreases nurse frustration and time barriers¹.

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

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