An Innovative Strategy to Improve the Quality of Care for Patients at End-of-Life

Deb Bohlen, MSN, RN, OCN – University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics, Iowa City, IA

Purpose

• To improve the quality of care for patients and families at end-of-life through the use of an innovative strategy of providing 100 bedside nurses with scholarships to complete the online End-of-Life Nursing Education Consortium (ELNEC) program.

• 99/100 registered nurses completed the online ELNEC program, with one nurse moving out-of-state. This $10,000 investment, provided by the Palliative Care program, made it possible for the nurses to receive the ELNEC education.

Objectives

• Discuss a unique scholarship program that enabled 100 bedside nurses at University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics (UIHC) to receive education online which improved the quality of end-of-life care.

• Identify improved knowledge and attitudinal scores of nurses after completing the online ELNEC program.

• Summarize improved patient satisfaction metrics that were realized after nurses completed the online ELNEC program.

Process / Implementation

• The UIHC Palliative Care team recognized a deficit in knowledge and nursing skill in providing quality end-of-life care and committed to support improvements.

• In April 2013, the Palliative Care program, under the direction of Ann Broderick, MD, provided scholarships for 100 bedside nurses to complete the online ELNEC program over the next year.

• ELNEC is a nationally recognized program intended to improve end-of-life care across the country.

• ELNEC content is divided into 8 modules, including nursing care at the end-of-life, pain management, symptom management, ethical/legal issues, cultural considerations in end-of-life care, communication, loss/grief/bereavement and preparation for and care at the time of death.

• Nurses are expected to pass all eight modules in order to successfully complete the ELNEC curriculum.

Relevance / Significance

• End-of-life care in the United States is often fragmented and inconsistent, leading to poor quality of care provided to patients and families.

• Specific end-of-life curricula are not consistently used to train professional health care providers to do the same.

• Only by improving the knowledge and skill of healthcare providers will we meet the importance of quality end-of-life care.

• Should strongly consider providing scholarship support for bedside nurses to enroll in the online ELNEC program.

• Improvements have been noted in other areas of patient satisfaction over the past year.

Conclusions / Implications for Nursing Practice

• The knowledge and skill that UIHC nurses gained from completing the online ELNEC program has contributed to improvements in care for patients and families at end-of-life.

• The expectation of this unique and innovative scholarship program is that the awardees will continue their commitment to UIHC by providing excellent end-of-life care by helping to mentor other health care professionals to do the same.

• Implications for broader implementation include that other healthcare organizations should strongly consider providing scholarship support for bedside nurses to enroll in the online ELNEC program.

Evaluation

A pre- and post-knowledge based and an attitudinal survey were required to be completed by all nurses participating in the ELNEC scholarship program.

• After completion of the ELNEC course, a 15.6% increase in the class score average was noted on the knowledge based post-test when compared to the pre-test.

• The attitudinal survey results are listed in the graph below. The scores were significantly higher on the post-survey, indicating that the nurses felt better prepared to provide quality end-of-life care after completing the ELNEC program.

ELNEC at UIHC (April 2013 – April 2014): Nursing Outcomes

Clear understanding of the philosophy and principles of palliative care

Able to describe interventions that can prevent or diminish symptoms at the end of life

Well prepared to assess physical, social and spiritual needs for dying patients/families

Understand concepts of personal death awareness & cumulative loss for nurses

Able to identify factors that influence communication in the palliative care setting

Able to identify the influence of culture on palliative care across the life span

Knowledgeable about ethical principles utilized in addressing end of life/palliative issues

Prepared to carry out pharmacology & non-pharmacologic therapies to relieve pain

Patient Results

• Since the initiation of the online ELNEC training program, the adult HCAHPS patient satisfaction aggregate scores for the question, “Was your pain well controlled?" have shown a 27% increase in the percentage of “Always” scores, raising the UIHC ranking for this question to 71st percentile nationally.

• Improvements have been noted in other areas of patient satisfaction over the past year.