Decreasing Delirium in the Adult Intensive Care Unit
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Background
Delirium is associated with increased morbidity and mortality, longer lengths of hospital stay, increased costs, and in some cases, long-term brain dysfunction. Intensive Care Unit (ICU) associated delirium rates are as high as 80%. Patients may either be admitted with delirium, or acquire it during their ICU stay.

Aim and Objective
The aim of this project is to reduce ICU associated delirium by 10% utilizing non-pharmacologic interventions called, “Simple Measures.” (SM) over a six month period. The interventions are designed to promote rest/sleep at night and to encourage activity and engagement with the care team during the day.

Current State
The Confusion Assessment Method for the ICU (CAM-ICU) is the recognized standard tool to measure the presence of ICU associated delirium. CAM-ICU documentation is a component of the ICU patient’s daily assessment and is discussed during Multi-Disciplinary Rounds.

According to pre-study chart reviews, the baseline ICU associated delirium prevalence rate was 63% (86/137).

Methods
A nurse-led quality improvement project tested a three-phase approach matching night-time and day-time interventions. Outcomes were measured using prevalence rates.

Phase I: Naturalize the environment
- 2300 hours, lights down in rooms and hallways.
- 2400-0400 hours, limit sleep interruptions. “Quiet Time” sign on the door.
- “Yacker Trackers,” decibel sensing devices assigned to various locations to evaluate noise levels in the unit.

Phase II: Continue Phase I
- Addition of light reducing eye masks, ear plugs and/or music/white noise.

Phase III: Continue Phase I and II
- RNs and Pharmacists discouraged use (unless absolutely necessary) of prescribed medications known to alter sleep and precipitate delirium. e.g., benzodiazepines, diphenhydramine and metoclopramide.

All Phases: Activity items during daytime hours (0800-2000) for patients with dementia and acute delirium. e.g., 6-10 inch fabric sports balls, texture balls, plush animals, dolls and Tangle Toy® hand-held puzzles.

Findings to Date
- Simple Measures innovations decrease the rate of delirium for ICU patients. Scheduling rest/sleep at night while limiting noise/light seems to be effective in reducing rates of ICU-associated delirium. Encouraging activity engagement, limiting nap periods, also seems to contribute to delirium reduction.

Recommendations

References


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