A quality improvement initiative to create a positive environment for sensory developmental care in a neonatal intensive care unit

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Summary
The process involved in developing and sustaining an initiative focused on quality improvement in the neonatal care setting.

Background
As a response to a leadership development workshop, myself as a mentee, was determined to change the face of nursing care. Upon conducting an audit in the ward of choice (neonatal intensive care), I identified that knowledge and practice of sensory developmental care of the premature and ill neonates was lacking. An initiative was then implemented to improve the quality of neonatal care, namely ‘You Matter.’

The logo for ‘You Matter’: a sensory developmental initiative

Methods
The process was based on the Leadership Model of Kouzes and Posner:¹

Model the way and inspire a shared vision served as the beginning of the project to ignite a spark and interest in sensory development of neonates. An audit was performed to assess skills and knowledge of staff. A logo was designed and a schedule was developed by the interprofessional team to guide interventions and keep track of implementation and progress.

Challenging the process and enabling others to act followed to involve management and to obtain authorization. The company’s existing quality improvement plan was used as a vehicle to drive the initiative. Implementation then involved discussions, use of teaching moments and demonstrations; posters in the neonatal cubicles were used to remind staff of sensory developmental principles which were focused on during the specific month; and the on-duty file was used to communicate further trainings. A ward poster was created for each month’s focus to increase awareness and ensure sustained improvement. The audit was then repeated on a monthly basis in order to assess progress, based on the month’s focus points.

Positive feedback was shared and celebrated when the focus points were adhered to during meetings and in the communication book.

Results
The final audit indicated improved knowledge and practice of the sensory developmental skills. There are still aspects that can be improved which will be addressed by using the posters as well as education through the communication file. The senior staff members of the interprofessional team continue with education and demonstration sessions.

A poster created to increase awareness and ensure sustained practice of sensory developmental care.

Conclusion
The Kouzes and Posner Leadership Model was an effective tool to develop leadership skills and guide initiative development.

The gap in knowledge was influenced by training, own experience of staff and sharing. Staff was receptive to change and teaching if they understood and valued the purpose thereof. With repetition of teaching, sharing and inspiring, as well as visibility of the information were effective to an extent.

References

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Take away messages
Buy-in of staff is crucial for the success of such an initiative. Management support and interprofessional collaboration contribute significantly to the outcomes of a project.

‘Leadership is not about being the best. Leadership is about making everyone else better.’

Questions I would like the audience’s response
Advice on maintaining an optimal initiative or change with a high management turnover. Audience’s experience in regards with sharing a vision, and inspiring a shared goal within a team.

Acknowledgements / Funding
A sincere thank you to MCHNLA, the sponsors SIGMA and Johnson & Johnson as well as Fundisa. The support has been much appreciated.

The logo for ‘You Matter’.

The audit template for January, or for the senses ‘Light’ and ‘Sleep’.

A next step in the initiative could be to focus on the orientation of new staff and ensuring that sensory developmental care is a priority in this process.

Light Supportive Care

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