

# Improving Assessment Adherence in Geriatric Psych Patients with Behavioral Symptoms of Agitation and Aggression in the Acute Care Setting Before Administering Psychotropic Medications

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## Problem

- There is currently no systemic or evidence-based process in place for nurses to follow on assessing inpatient geriatric psychiatric patients when they experience agitation and aggression.
- There are no guidelines to help nurses determine what interventions are appropriate, other than use of psychotropics.
- The World Health Organization anticipates the population age 60 years and older will increase to 900 million.
- With old age comes increase age related diseases, such as Dementia, that will at some point require inpatient treatment.
- 8% -44% of the geriatric population will experience some type of psychological symptoms such as agitation or aggression.
- Psychotropic medications are commonly administered to residents in inpatient geriatric Psychiatric units to manage behaviors, and of ten times over used in this population.
- It is well documented that older adults are vulnerable to the adverse effects of psychotropic drugs.
- People older than 70 are three times more likely to have complications related to the use of psychotropic medications and require longer hospital stay and decline in overall health
- Non-pharmacological interventions are less often used and can be a safe alternative to treating/correcting behaviors if staff properly assessed for cause of behaviors.

## Project Purpose

The purpose of this project is to implement a routine assessment, tool and checklist from evidence-based practice that will improve the assessment adherence of nurses in an inpatient geriatric psychiatric unit before the administration of psychotropic medications

## Lewin's Change Theory

### LEWIN'S CHANGE MODEL

Lewin's Three Stage Change Process – Practical Steps



## Setting

- The primary site for this DNP project took place in an inpatient geriatric psychiatric unit at a hospital located in a southeastern state.

## Methodology

- Lewin's Change Theory was used to guide the implementation of assessment tools and check list on the inpatient unit.

### Unfreezing

- Need for change was identified through gap analysis.
- Committee was formed
- Staff encouraged to release old patterns of treating geriatric psychiatric patients with psychotropic medications before a detailed assessment was completed.
- Education was provided regarding the need for change in assessment and treatment practices was included in this stage.
- Inservice and education included research and evidence-based measures that proved proper assessment of behaviors can prevent an adverse impact to patients for unnecessary use of psychotropics.

### Change

- The assessment tool and checklist was incorporated into practice to serve as tools for staff to use for assessment of agitation and aggressive behavior.
  - Assessment tools created by Fraser health were used.
- Barriers to change was identified.
  - One on one conversations was held with staff to identify what they felt was a barrier to change.
- Staff educational needs was addressed.
  - 15-minute huddle meetings held 3 times weekly.
  - Short Q & A sessions held after huddle meetings.

### Refreezing

- The assessment tools remained available for any staff to use if behaviors of agitation and aggression was noted.
- Flyers/handout were posted and placed in staff areas for continued education to promote adherence to assessment of behaviors before use of psychotropic medications.
- Support from stakeholders was continued.
- Continued to monitor and follow up with staff on use of tools and staff support.
- An evaluation of problems encountered, successes and challenges throughout project was evaluated for future improvement.

## Results

- 39 charts reviewed
- 24 received assessments and had checklist completed
  - 21 of these patients were treated with non-pharmacological interventions and had better outcomes
  - 3 of the patients were treated with pharmacological intervention
- 15 were without assessment or check lists.
  - All received pharmacological treatment
  - Increase in drowsiness was experienced
  - 1 patient had a fall
- Staff appeared to be more educated with use of tools.
- As a result of the DNP project, the inpatient geriatric psych facility has agreed to:
  - Maintain process of assessment of agitation and aggressive behaviors.
  - Participate in continued education of staff on the use of assessment tools and checklist
  - Possibly integrate assessment into the EHR

## Implication for Practice

- Gaps between recommended use and actual use of the assessment tools and checklist can be related to both interpersonal and external barriers.
- The staff's attitudes, motivation, and readiness to use and document on the assessment tools have significant implications to changing practice
- Early identification and proper assessment of agitation and aggressive behaviors can prevent unnecessary use of psychotropic medications.
- Recognizing the factors that function as facilitators for enhanced implementation can guide efforts to strengthen change of evidence into practice.