

ABSTRACT

INTERVENTIONS TO SUPPORT STAFF CARING FOR PEDIATRIC BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PATIENTS IN THE EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT

Denise Bach MSN, RN, CPEN

Rebecca Neichter MSN, BS, RN, CNL, CPEN

Jennifer Mattei DNP, RN, NPD-BC, CPN, CPEN

PURPOSE: Emergency departments (ED) across the country continue to see increasing volumes of behavioral health (BH) patients. With this increased volume, an increased number of aggressive patients has also been noted. The staff in our pediatric ED frequently expressed their uneasiness when caring for BH patients, and voiced concern over the number of resources being allocated to BH patients. The purpose of this evidence based practice (EBP) project was to discover what additional resources would be perceived by staff to be the most beneficial to increase their safety, comfort level and job satisfaction when caring for BH patients.

DESIGN: A survey study design was used in this project. The initial survey was sent to all 182 ED patient care staff in October, 2015. This survey explored how prepared staff felt providing care to aggressive BH patients, their fears and barriers when providing care to BH patients and suggestions to improve care for BH patients. Forty five (24.7%) surveys were returned. A follow up survey was distributed December, 2019 to all staff members who continued to be employed in the ED when the 2015 survey was sent (79 staff members). There were 41 (51.8%) post surveys returned. Both surveys were completed and returned anonymously using Survey Monkey.

SETTING: The setting for this EBP project was the ED of a large Midwest level one pediatric trauma center in an urban setting. Average number of monthly MH visits in the ED during the time the project took place was 528.

PARTICIPANTS/SUBJECTS: Staff receiving both surveys included ED RNs, EMT-Ps and patient care assistants (PCA) who were working in the ED 10/2015 through 12/2019. Participants included all full time, part time and stand by staff.

METHODS: Findings from the 2015 survey supported the need for additional resources for BH patients. As a result, several evidence based interventions and resources were implemented to support staff during 2016 thru 2018. Interventions and resources included: a crisis intervention page, mental health crisis training, the addition of designated staff to work 1:1 with BH patients, the addition of dedicated ED mental health specialists (MHS), and a dedicated 6 bed unit for ED BH patients.

RESULTS/OUTCOMES: Results from the 2019 survey indicated that overall staff now felt more prepared to care for BH patients (90%) compared to 2015. The two resources

ED staff found most significantly supported their care of BH patients were a dedicated MHS in the ED (75.6%) and a dedicated BH patient 1:1 (43.9%). An increased number of staff reported they now attempt verbal de-escalation for an aggressive patient (65.8%) compared to 28.9% in 2015. The greatest concerns staff report when caring for an aggressive BH patient continued to be injury (self or others) and medical patients not being seen.

IMPLICATIONS: The results of this EBP project demonstrate increased staff comfort when caring for BH patients, as well as increased staff satisfaction in regards to the amount of resources available for BH patients. Additionally, staff reported utilizing verbal de-escalation as the chosen intervention for aggressive patients.

AUDIENCE TYPE: Clinical

OBJECTIVE/OUTCOMES: Staff support and improved patient care

References:

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