The Front Line Nurses’ Experiences in Caring for Pediatric Patients and Families with Limited English Proficiency

Jennifer Stephen MSN, RN, CPN
Cook Children’s Health Care System
Fort Worth, Texas
Objectives:

- Describe common emotions and cues expressed by nurses caring for patients and families with limited English proficiency.
- Summarize the definitions of nursing care when assigned patients and families with communication challenges related to language.

Conflicts of interest: none

Grants: Sigma Theta Tau Delta Theta Chapter and James A. “Buddy” Davidson

Cook Children’s
Problem

- Literature providing guidance for nurses navigating the language gap in the in-patient pediatric setting is non-existent.
Background/Significance

- Languages spoken at home in the United States
- Limited English proficiency (LEP)
- Standards regarding language services, communication and care
- Interpreter options
- Outcomes for patients/families with LEP
Purpose

- Understand the experience of pediatric nurses caring for patients and families with LEP and how nurses navigate the communication gap.
Methods

- Qualitative, Phenomenology
- 15 medical/surgical pediatric nurses
  - Participant demographics
- “Describe your experience in caring for patients and families with LEP.”
- Interviews audiotaped, transcribed and coded
Results

- Caring for patients and families with LEP
  - Is there a difference?
  
  “To me personally it’s the same, the care I give. Now in terms of conversation and explaining it’s different.”
Results

Caring for patients and families with LEP

- Nurses’ definition of care
  - Task oriented vs holistic
  - Care includes family

“I was thinking that maybe I don’t do as good of a job as I should…care is not just giving the medication or the bath,…it is making them feel comfortable, talking to them, engaging them, all that.”

“You want the whole family to feel that they’re getting good care… and you don’t always feel like that.”
Results

- Caring for patients and families with LEP
  - Consequences of care
    - Empathy
      “Because if I was in their shoes, I would feel uncomfortable.”
  - FRUSTRATION
    “It’s frustrating, no matter how you deal with it, but it just happens.”
Results

- Missing the connection
  - Lack of connection
  - Lack of engagement
  - Desire to establish trust
  - Nurses’ negative feelings

“If you can’t connect with the patient or the parent or the family, then you don’t really establish that full sense of being able to care for your patients like you should.”
Results

- How do nurses navigate the communication gap?
  - Nurse Sensing
    - Assessment of nonverbal/behavioral and environmental cues
Results

**Nonverbal Behavior**
- Look in the eye, head nod, faces
- Crying
- Reserved
- Not just shaking of head to be polite or while the nurse is speaking

**Nurse is looking for…**
- Confusion
- Misunderstanding
- Clarity
- Lack of understanding
- Confirmation of understanding and building trust
Results

- How do nurses navigate the communication gap?
  - Interpreters
  - Nurse verbal and non-verbal methods
  - Starting off right
Results

- Challenges of caring
  - EXTRA, EXTRA, EXTRA interventions
  - LACK, LACK, LACK of …

“try your best”
Discussion

- Nurses experience a mismatch in their personal definition of care for patients and families with LEP.
- Nurses caring for patients and families with LEP experience emotional distress.
- Nurses utilize a variety of methods in attempt to fill the communication gap and connect with patients and families.
Clinical Implications

- Communication resources are necessary for caring for patients and families with LEP.
- Nurse leaders should monitor front line nurses’ for burnout and distress.
- Nurse leaders should assign care providers according to language spoken when possible.
Future Research

- Study replication in settings where English is not the primary language.
- Exploratory qualitative study describing the patients and families’ experiences and perceptions when receiving care from other language-speaking nurses.
References


References


References
