The opioid epidemic is a pressing public health issue with an estimate of 2 million Americans in 2014 reporting abuse or dependence. Prevalence of misuse or abuse in the nursing population parallels the general population, The American Nurses Association (ANA) estimates that 6-8% of nurses use alcohol or drugs to an extent that is sufficient to impair professional performance.

The evidence supports that Warning Signs of potential diversion are not to be ignored the following; A change in job performance, Request of change in shift, Absences from the unit for extended periods, Frequent trips to the bathroom, Arriving late or leaving early, Making an excessive number of mistakes, including medication errors, should be used as a guide in prevention. Diversion is the theft of drugs, usually drugs that are classified as controlled substances. The American Association of Nurse Anesthetists (AANA) advocates that early identification of the signs and behaviors associated with substance abuse disorder and drug diversion reduces the risk of harm to patients and providers. Nurse leaders should be able to recognize symptoms of impairment with the goal of preventing harm to patients and staff and the oversight of good practice. Risk factors are inherent in our profession. There are several Nursing specialties that are at greater risk of substance abuse such as oncology, critical care, psychiatry and anesthesia because of the emotional and physical toll and ease of access to narcotics. In addition, nurses are at higher risk as the accessibility of drugs, their knowledge of pain management and sense of control. As well as ease of access (Bell et al).

Drug diversion spreads infection from healthcare providers to patients and has the potential of grave outcomes. Tampering or substitution is the most pernicious diversion method as it results in denial of needed medication and may impose the risk of infection of blood borne pathogens from the diverter to the patient. Everyone is affected by drug diversion and we all have a responsibility in prevention. Hospitals have established policies and procedures. Surveillance and development of policies to augment monitoring of controlled substance administration, documentation and wasting are essential in protecting our staff and patients. The nurse leader has a key role in achieving organizational goals. They are the link between the strategic priorities, policy implementation and adherence, safety and the front line staff. Nurse Leaders create a culture and processes that support system initiatives and foster healthy and positive workplace environments. Additionally the nurse manager plays an integral role in developing an empowering work environment by facilitating tools needed for support guidance and in promoting safety. Empowerment is one of those tools and it can be an effective tool that nurse leaders can use to increase the competence and confidence of their nursing team by fostering an environment that supports mutual respect, dignity and compassion. Supportive nurse managers that focus on trust and open communication are more likely to result in a skilled and confident nursing team who are involved in decision making, demonstrate critical thinking and actively promote clinical effectiveness. This can be instrumental in providing an opportunity for team member’s to speak up and to recognize the signs of impairment and learn how to address it appropriately.

Substance abuse within the nursing profession is of significant concern due to the nature of our role as nurses’ and our relationship and interaction with patients and the community we serve. Nurses who are confronted with substance use disorder place patients and themselves at risk; additionally they are not caring for themselves. It is not common for us to imagine that a valued peer may be using substances to cope with stress. Therefore resources to promote prevention and early recognition in the workplace are
tools to empower and support our nurse leaders, colleagues, and peers and promote the overall safety of our team. Nurse leaders should be able to recognize symptoms of abuse and diversion to mitigate harm to patients and staff.

Title:
Prevention Surveillance and Investigation of Controlled Substance Misuse in the Workplace: The Nurse Leaders’ Role

Keywords:
nurse leaders, safe environment, prevention, surveillance and detection and substance abuse and misuse in nursing

References:


Abstract Summary:
An estimated 2 million Americans reported narcotic abuse or dependence in 2014. Prevalence of substance abuse in nursing parallels the general population. Identification of signs and symptoms of abuse, diversion and best practice strategies for investigation are essential for nursing leaders in their role to foster safety in the workplace.

Content Outline:
The American Nurses Association (ANA) estimates that 6-8% of nurses use alcohol or drugs to an extent that is sufficient to impair professional performance. This presentation will provide an overview of symptoms of abuse in the nursing population, review risk factors, best practices and resources to prevent and increase awareness of substance abuse and diversion.
Main Points:

1) The national opioid crisis includes the health care industry.
   a) It is estimated that 100,000 health care workers are abusing or are dependent on prescription drugs in a given year.

2) The prevalence of substance abuse in the nurse population parallels the general population.
   a) The American Nurses Association estimated 6-8% of nurses are practicing while impaired.

3) Nurse leaders should be able to recognize symptoms of abuse and diversion to mitigate harm to patients and staff
   a) Impact on patients and organization include reckless endangerment, abuse of the vulnerable, theft of time and care, fraud and loss of community confidence
   b) The center for Disease Control and Prevention has linked drug diversion to infectious disease outbreaks

4) Risk Factors
   a) Nursing specialties at greater risk for substance abuse include critical care, oncology, psychiatry, and anesthesia
      i) increased risk factors include the emotional and physical toll of the job
      ii) Accessibility of drugs common to the area of practice

5) Warning signs and Behaviours of Substance Abuse and Drug Diversion
   a) behavior changes; mood swings, poor job performance
   b) Signs of Diversion: Removal of controlled substances when not needed, without physician orders

6) Prevention, Surveillance and Detection
   a) Use of tools to prevent diversion, medicate drips lock boxes, automated medication dispensing machines
   b) Policies: controlled substance procurement, monitoring, prescribing, distribution, administration, wasting and documentation
   c) Controlled substance audits; review of medication administration records, chart audits and patient interviews

Conclusion

A. Strong security measures on monitoring of controlled substance is required to mitigate gaps in prevention, detection and response to substance abuse and drug diversion in the workplace
B. Nurses have a legal and ethical responsibility to uphold the law and protect society from drug abuse

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