

Early Interventions: Suicide Assessment Education in the Post-Operative Environment

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Background Information: Suicide has reached epidemic proportions, ranking among the top ten leading causes of death in the United States. The Joint Commission has called on hospitals to conduct risk assessments for patients deemed at risk of suicide. Perianesthesia nurses practice on the front lines with a great number of opportunities to identify and intervene in suicidal patients using a standard Suicide Risk Assessment Tool. A recent event in the Post Anesthesia Care Unit (PACU) identified a knowledge deficit in nursing interventions and care for a patient who expressed suicidal ideation in the PACU phase of care.

Objectives of Project: The PACU nurse will be able to identify the escalation process, institutional policy, and available resources when caring for a patient suspected of suicidal ideation.

Process of Implementation:

- Developed a core group of nurses to evaluate patient incident that occurred in the PACU
- Identified best practices from incident and gaps
- Developed a survey to assess nurses knowledge
- Reviewed institutional policy
- Developed resource tool based on institutional policy
- Provided open forum discussion regarding nurses' comfort level and knowledge base in caring for patients that express suicidal ideation
- Provided one to one in-service education and training for all PACU team members

Statement of Successful Practice: Pre-survey results revealed 51% of staff surveyed indicated a knowledge deficit related to the institutional policy and available resources. Additionally, 68% of nurses surveyed were not familiar with the Suicide Risk Assessment Tool and 41% of nurses were unsure of how to escalate care for suicidal patients. Pre-survey also revealed 94% of the nurses surveyed believed education regarding suicide assessment resources and policies would improve nursing response and intervention for these patients. Post education, 84% surveyed indicated knowledge and understanding of the institutional policy, as well as interventions and resources for suicidal patients. Post education, 78% of nurses surveyed reported increased familiarity with the Suicide Risk Assessment tool, and 90% indicated understanding of escalation of care.

Implications for Advancing the Practice of Perianesthesia Nursing: Providing education on escalation processes and resources could improve patient outcomes, nursing knowledge and confidence when caring for suicidal patients. As a result of this project, the suicide assessment documentation will be added to employee orientation in the PACU.