

Research Project

Name of Project

Improving the Safety of Psychiatric Consumers: The Effect of Two Medication Administration Protocols on the Distractions and Medication Errors of Nurses in Psychiatric Inpatient Units

Research Team

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Funding Body

Self Funded

Project Summary

Improving medication safety is a national priority for Australian psychiatric facilities. Medication administration errors by nurses have serious consequences including patient injury, death, and increased health-care costs. Nurses frequently cite that one of the main causes of medication administration errors are distractions and interruptions by patients, co-workers, conversation, noise, increases in activity, and congestion in the workspace during medication rounds.

Nurses administering medications in a medical-surgical setting experienced significantly fewer distractions than usual when they used a 'focused protocol' designed to support concentration on medication administration tasks. The protocol stipulated that during medication rounds, medication nurses were to use a medication administration checklist and refrain from engaging in activities or conversations unrelated to medication administration tasks. Even fewer distractions were experienced when medication nurses following the 'focused protocol' also wore red safety vests with the words "do not disturb" printed on the front and back ('red-vest protocol'). Nurses who used the red vest protocol experienced 87% fewer distractions than those performing their medication rounds as usual.

The effect of these protocols in reducing medication error rates has not been directly measured. In addition, these interventions have not been trialed in psychiatric settings where the organisation and delivery of care, as well as the characteristics of the consumers' conditions, differ from those in medical-surgical units. The proposed project aims to test the effectiveness of 'focused', and 'red-vest' protocols within three acute inpatient psychiatric units.

Progress

Ethics approval has been granted and data collection is in progress.

Summary of Findings

Publications