Abstract:

Introduction: While the aspect of “comfort” by healthcare providers is a high priority, the perception by elderly patients is quite different. Comfort is associated with contentment and synonymous with relief, calmness, wellbeing and being consoled. Often, when basic needs are met, contentment and satisfaction occur contributing to an improved mood and comfort.

Method: With the growth in the elderly population over age 80 our organization noted lower satisfaction scores in this group, particularly among females. Top deciles patient satisfaction is a strong objective for healthcare organizations across the country. Through a simple intervention for care, providing a “Comfort Shawl” for warmth, the intent was to address comfort needs, prevent adverse safety events and improve patient satisfaction. Patient Shawls are often too large, ill fitting, and made of thin fabric which does not provide adequate coverage or warmth. Temperature regulation in the elderly is not as efficient as in a younger population.

Result: Through a pilot program, with the help of the Volunteer staff, the Comfort Shawls were distributed to elderly patients over age 80 on a medical-surgical orthopedic unit. The pilot started in December 2011 and 100 shawls were made to be distributed at the nurse’s discretion to those in need.

Conclusion: Preliminary results from received Nursing surveys revealed that 99.07% of the patients verbalized or expressed satisfaction when the shawl was received. Of the 50 surveys returned, 90% of the nursing staff felt that the patient’s sleep was improved while another 50% believed that the effect of the Comfort Shawl could contribute to falls prevention.

Methods:

- Nursing staff received education about the Comfort Shawl pilot in huddles, at unit meetings and with daily reminders using the following concepts.

The Comfort Shawl Pilot

Comfort is associated with contentment and synonymous with relief, calmness, wellbeing and being consoled. The Comfort Shawl addresses all of these sensations with a subliminal message to patients. “We care” about their comfort. Patient Shawls are often too large or ill fitted, not warm or provide insufficient cover. Providing a Comfort Shawl for elderly patients, those over age 80, to help cover their upper body for warmth and privacy supports a holistic concept of care. Research has shown that patients sleep better, have less wandering and need for toileting when they are sleeping comfortably.

The Comfort Shawl Pilot

- The purpose of the shawl is to provide warmth and comfort for our elderly patients.
- Nurses will distribute the shawl based on assessment of need.
- It is a “one person use” item which would be sent home with the patient.
- The colorful shawl covers the upper body and adds warmth, additional skin coverage and protection.

Here is how the process works.

- When distributing the shawl to the patient, stress that it is for their “comfort and warmth” from the Nursing staff. It is also advised to inform the patient’s family as well.
- Document on the tabulation sheet, the patient’s MR number & age.
- There will be a limit of 100 shawls for the pilot.
- Your input is valued. Please complete the Nursing survey tool within 24 hours after the shawl is provided and return it to the unit CNS. The volunteers have helped make the shawls and will continue to support the effort with a successful pilot.

Discharge Call back

In the discharge call back process, please ask those patients age 80 and above if they received the shawl and inquire on their satisfaction with them.

Thanks for your support!

Nursing Survey Tool:

What was the patient’s reaction to receiving the shawl?

- Simulated
- Appeared to be satisfied
- Sad
- Unaffected
- Confused
- Verbal expression of pleasure
- Verbal expression of dismay
- Expressed warmth
- No expression
- Other

What time frame did you distribute most of the shawls during your shift?

- 8am-noon
- noon-4pm
- 4pm-8pm
- 8pm-midnight
- Midnight-4am
- 4am-8am

Assessing as objectively as possible, did the shawls help improve your patient’s sleep?

- Yes
- NO
- NA

Improving sleep can lead to less wandering and attempts to get out of bed, ultimately preventing falls. Assessing as objectively as possible, could use of the shawls assist in falls prevention?

- Yes
- NO
- NA

Additional Comments:

Please return the completed survey to your Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS).

Thank You!

Figure 1: Message that was in the clear plastic wrapped package containing the shawl. The shawl was given to the nurse by the Nurse after assessing for comfort needs.

Figure 2: Comfort Shawl modeled by Linda. The shawls were made with pile fur fleece in the Advocate “purple” color and distributed to patients based on nursing assessment of need.

Figure 3: Staff Education Information. Additional rounding with staff to support the effort was completed.

Results:

Figure 6. Percent of shawls distributed within the designated time frames from survey results (n=30 returned surveys).

Figure 7. Survey results related to improved sleep and assistance in prevention of falls (n=30 returned surveys).

Conclusions:

1. Based on Nursing surveys received, addressing upper body warmth of elderly patients, primarily females, led to increased satisfaction, comfort and mood in those who received the Comfort Shawl.
2. Of the 30 returned Nursing surveys, 30% felt that patients had improved sleep and 50% identified that this intervention could help contribute to a decrease in fall events.
3. Thirty completed surveys were received based on 78 shawls distributed accounting for a 38% return.
4. Forty six percent of the shawls were distributed between 4pm and midnight. This has implications for further research addressing Nursing care issues, comfort and staff availability during that time frame.
5. While overall scores may not reflect one particular intervention, trending of patient satisfaction results would be appropriate to address future needs.

References: