Partnering with hospital providers to facilitate handoff for persons with dementia in the acute care setting

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Abstract

Objectives: Individuals with Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias cannot verbalize their care needs during transitions of care (TOC) and rely on their home caregivers (HCs) for advocacy. The lack of communication between clinicians in one setting and HCs can lead to detrimental health outcomes for the length of stay. With the assistance of Family Nurse Consultants (FNCs), a standardized care needs communication tool (SCNCT) for support persons of persons with dementia (PWD) was implemented to enhance the ability of the support person to communicate care needs during TOC.

Method: Participants of the project included FNCs who assessed the needs of the PWD enrolled in a specialized adult daycare center. After obtaining IRB approval, pre- and post-educational 5-point Likert scale surveys were administered to capture if a gap exists in communication care needs for cognitively impaired individuals and if the tool can help bridge that gap. A PowerPoint presentation was utilized for training the FNCs on the SCNCT. Participants were informed to anticipate another survey within thirty days of follow-up training.

Results: Descriptive statistics were utilized to analyze the Likert scale questions for all surveys. Only the last question of the 30-day post-implementation survey yielded scale data. Eight FNCs completed the pre-survey and another survey post-presentation. Seven of them responded to the survey 30-day post-project implementation. The tool was new to the FNCs, and the output generated a utilization rate of 43%. Moreover, HCs who were offered the tool benefited from that time of preparation for their loved ones. There was also a statistically significant improvement in FNCs' perception of the value and usefulness of the tool after they were introduced to it. The results of the two-tailed Wilcoxon signed-rank test conducted to investigate the pre- and post-survey scores were significant based on p = .039.

Conclusion: The project did not demonstrate the HCs’ involvement with the tool due to limitations associated with the COVID 19 pandemic, yet the results showed promising due to the champions’ perceived value. Nonetheless, the project findings revealed that HCs could be crucial members to strengthen TOC for the cognitively impaired individual using the SCNCT.
| Returning survey (post 30-day project implementation) | FNCs still perceived the tool to safeguard individuals with ADRD | Average FNCs using the tool | Average Use of the tool | Utilization Rate of Tool |
|-----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| N=7 (87.5% response rate)                           | 86%                                                          | N=3                         | N=5                     | 43%                      |