Addressing the Challenges in Acute Stroke Care: Engaging Nurses in Best Practices
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Problem: Despite the evidence supporting best practices in stroke care, significant gaps in translating this knowledge into action remains in Canada. Some of the observed variation in stroke care can be attributed to the lack of awareness and implementation of practice guidelines.

Evidence: Organized stroke care and the establishment of best practice standards in stroke can significantly improve outcomes by improving prevention, treatment and rehabilitation of patients with stroke (evidence levels A-C).

Strategy: A standardized national educational resource based on the Canadian Best Practice Recommendations for Stroke Care 2006 was created to provide consistent materials in a modular format to educate nurses and members of the inter-professional stroke team on best practices across the acute stroke continuum.

Evaluation: A modular workshop package was created that includes instructor and participant guides with workshop slides and speaker’s notes, references and resources for the workshop.

Practice Change: The workshop was pilot tested in June 2008 as a pre-conference workshop at the annual meeting of the Canadian Association of Neuroscience Nurses. The original materials were revised and retested at two workshops in the fall of 2008.

Results: Fifty-three nurses ranging in experience from novice to expert (< 1 year - >20 years experience) participated in the pilot workshop. Two identified gaps included stroke prevention and advanced acute care stroke management, currently under development as additional modules.

Recommendations: 1) Develop a comprehensive national implementation plan and 2) translate materials into French in 2009 when workshop evaluations are complete.

Lessons Learned: Nurses are integral in the delivery of stroke services across the continuum, thus engaging nurses as leaders in uptake and translation of best practice knowledge into action is key in the development of successful stroke strategies. An integrated and coordinated approach to stroke care, including prevention, acute management, rehabilitation, recovery and reintegration in the community will help bridge the gap between what we know and what we do.

Reference List

