Mentorship: A Day of New Perspectives  
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**Problem:** Nursing practice is changing rapidly with continuous advances in practice. New and most of the current nursing staff on the neurological unit did not feel proficient in performing neurological checks and understanding outcomes of the neurological exam. Most of the staff nurses were unaware which practices regarding neurosurgical care were evidenced based.

**Evidence:** Benner’s Novice to Expert Theory believes increments of change occur with increases in skill performance, based on education and experience. Benner identified five levels of nursing performance: novice, advanced beginner, competent, proficient, and expert. As one increases knowledge and experience one moves through the continuum from novice to expert.

**Strategy:** The nurses would follow the Neurosurgical APN for a day to increase their knowledge and skills of neurological assessments, complications, neurological changes and when to notify the M.D. Patients at all levels of the continuum were seen and diagnostic results reviewed including lab, CT scans, MRIs, & angiography to integrate knowledge, practice, critical thinking skills and evidence based practice.

**Practice Change:** All new hires and current nursing staff were assigned a day to follow the Neurosurgical APN. During this day the following was reviewed and practiced: motor & sensory examination for upper & lower extremities, cranial nerve examination, neurological examination of patients with TBI who are awake & comatose, post craniotomy, Subarachnoid hemorrhage (SAH), SCI, and post spinal surgery. Also reviewed were complications, documentation, anatomy & physiology, evidenced based practice and when to notify the physician for patient with TBI, SAH, post cranial surgery and post spinal surgery.

**Evaluation:** The nurses were observed and were able to independently perform neurological examinations for brain and spine patients. They were able to identify abnormal assessments. The nurses’ critical thinking skills improved. When phone calls to the physician or APN were made, the necessary information was able to be provided for appropriate physician orders. Inappropriate phone calls to physicians/APN were decreased. The nursing staff was able to answer the patients and families’ questions easier & appropriately.

**Results:** At the end of their day, the nurses were more proficient in performing neurological assessments on all types of patients. The nurses increased their critical thinking skills, understanding of neurological examination, anatomy & physiology, and evidenced based practice. Their comfort level increased due to their increased knowledge which increased their job satisfaction. The level of patient care increased as a result.

**Recommendations:** Advanced Nurse Practitioners from each specialty should commit the time to increase the staff’s knowledge and experience to improve patient care and patient, nursing and physician satisfaction.
Lessons learned: The nurses all started out at varying degrees of knowledge and experience, so the day needed to be tailored for each nurse to get the most out of the day. Some nurses learn easier by having tasks demonstrated while others learned easier by discussion and then performing the task. All of the nurses thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity and increased skills and knowledge. By teaching the staff, it also helped to keep the APN's perspectives up to date.

Bibliography: