Acute Certified Stroke Nurse: Closing the Gap of Public Knowledge on Stroke
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Problem:
Stroke is a major healthcare problem for it is a leading cause of mortality and disability in the United States. The public continues to be insufficiently aware of the warning signs, risk factors, and prevention strategies for stroke. Only one in five Americans can name more than two symptoms of stroke. Acute certified stroke nurses have a key role to play in closing the gap of this public knowledge deficit.

Evidence:
Articles found in CINAHL, PubMED, OVID, Medscape and AHA/ASA support existence of low public awareness of stroke. Authors were unable to discover any mention of the role of acute stroke nurses in community education.

Strategy:
To develop a process that would facilitate the utilization of the knowledge and expertise of the acute stroke nurse in community outreach initiatives related to stroke education.

Practice Change:
A simple, detailed spreadsheet of community events and activity expectations of the nurse are made available. The nurse chooses the event based on their own availability, the event location, and activity required. The nurse then contacts the event coordinator, who provides details, materials, and supplies, making participation simple for the nurses.

Evaluation:
Data (community events, number of contacts, RN names and hours) are logged in a spreadsheet. Evaluations and findings from stroke screenings are tabulated and disseminated to stroke staff.

Results:
From 2009 to 2010, the total number of contacts made at community education events increased by 89%. The number of certified stroke RNs hours provided increased by 71%. Overall, the total number of community education RN stroke hours provided increased by 50%.

Recommendations:
Opportunity exists to engage frontline certified stroke nurses in providing evidence-based education to enhance public awareness on the warning signs of stroke and when to seek treatment.

Lessons Learned:
Providing the stroke nurse with direct convenient access of community stroke events elicits greater participation.