Increasing Cancer Patients' Ability to Manage Their Pain through the Use of a Patient Education Tool  
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Problem: Pain is one of the most common symptoms cancer patients experience. Studies have shown that 50% of all cancer patients, and up to 75% of advanced stage cancer patients experience pain (American Cancer Society, 2007; International Association for the Study of Pain, 2009; Yildirim, Cicek, & Uyar, 2009). Although 95% of these patients could be free of significant pain, 42% report that they do not receive adequate pain relief (Al-Atiyyat, 2008; Anderson, et al., 2004).

Evidence: Poor control of pain is attributed to a number of factors including poor assessment and patients' reluctance to take pain medications (Beresford, 2007; Davis & Walsh, 2004).

Strategy: Using Katharine Kolcaba's Comfort theory, by providing patients with the knowledge, skills, and strategies to manage pain, their pain will be relieved and the patient will therefore be at ease knowing that they have the ability to manage future pain.

Practice Change: Implementation of a Patient Education Tool (PET) specifically created to (1) address assessment of pain, (2) provide the patient a simple location to write their pain medication regimen, and (3) to address some of the most frequent misconceptions about pain and pain medications.

Evaluation: Average pain scores over an admission for cancer patients were compared pre and post implementation.

Results: A retrospective analysis of 30 patients pre-implementation revealed a mean pain score of 3.4. A preliminary post-implementation analysis has revealed in increase in mean pain scores; largely attributed to improved pain assessment by Nurses and Nursing Assistants.

Recommendations: Implementation of the PET provides staff members with a valuable tool to more accurately assess pain. With continual use of the PET through an inpatient stay patients should also gain the knowledge necessary to manage their pain once discharged.

Lessons Learned: Although a quantitative assessment was conducted, and the same assessment will be conducted again in 6 months for trending, the effectiveness of the PET for patients would be better evaluated through a qualitative survey.
Bibliography:


