Looking at the Evidence: A Paradigm to Improve the Critical Thinking Skills of the Newly Trained Triage Nurse in the Emergency Department
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Problem:
Underdeveloped triage critical thinking skills can cause poor patient outcomes due to the inability to correctly assign triage categories for patients presenting in the Emergency Department.

Evidence:
During a recent quality review, it was noted that triage categories assigned by newly trained Emergency Department triage nurses often did not reflect the severity or lack of severity of the patients’ symptoms and or conditions. A thorough search of the literature using CINHAL and Medline revealed no evidence on the triage competencies of newly trained triage nurses.

Strategy:
As a result of the evidence, a strategy was constructed to help assist and improve the critical thinking skills of the newly trained triage nurse in the Emergency Department.

Practice Change:
A paradigm was developed to improve critical thinking skills through chart review, remediation, and mentoring to improve the triage capabilities of newly trained Emergency Department triage nurses with less clinical experience.

Evaluation:
A cohort of newly trained ER triage nurses’ critical thinking skills who received the intervention was compared with newly trained ER triage nurses’ critical thinking skills who did not receive the intervention. Evaluation included the implementation of remediation which included the discussion of triage assignments, review of pathophysiology, and identification of the number of patient resources needed with reference to the ESI Version 4 Implementation Manual.

Results:
Significant improvement in appropriate triage assignments were revealed, which validates that this paradigm does aid, assist, and improve the critical thinking skills of the newly trained triage nurse in the Emergency Department.

Recommendations:
Underdeveloped triage critical thinking skills in newly trained triage nurses with less clinical experience can be improved through mentoring and outcome evaluations which ultimately improves patient care and clinical outcomes.

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Lessons Learned:
With perseverance and patience, newly trained triage nurses can improve their critical thinking skills with the support and assistance of senior staff and use of this educational paradigm.

Bibliography:
