Improving Team Communication on a Med/Surg Unit

The Problem
- Both Registered Nurses (RNs) and Patient Care Technicians (PCTs) on CC7 expressed that poor communication between the two groups resulted in missed patient care, staff and patient dissatisfaction, and a growing sense of divide between the two working groups.
- There was no current standardized format for report/verbal handoff between RNs and PCTs at the beginning of each shift resulting in a lack of communication and no clear set expectations between each group for the duration of the shift.

Aim/Goal
This nurse-led quality improvement project was aimed at improving communication and collaboration among RNs and PCTs on CC7 during change of shift reporting practices and continuing throughout the shift. Effective communication and closed loop communication between hospital team members is an essential component of care and ensures improved quality of care.

The Team
- Maureen Cunniffe, MSN, RN
  Staffing Office
- Tracy Lee, MSN RN
  Nurse Manager, CC7
- Patti Paradis, MSN, RN
  Administrative Clinical Supervisor
- RNs and PCTs on CC7

The Interventions
The team
- Observed the current state of change of shift report between RNs and PCTs.
- Surveyed both RNs and PCTs with the same three questions to gather what information is currently communicated and what information PCTs need to best take care of patients on their assignment.
- Designed a scripted process for change of shift report highlighting specified areas of information needed to be followed by both RNs and PCTs.
- Re-surveyed staff at six and twelve weeks after the implementation of the scripted report.
- Using the PDSA Model for Improvement changes were made throughout the project.

The Results/Progress to Date
- A prescribed report/verbal handoff process has become standard practice on all three shifts on CC7.
- Witnessed increase communication between RNs and PCTs throughout the shift.
- Bump up in patient satisfaction scores.
- Positive patient and staff feedback regarding teamwork on the unit.
- Decreased Nurse Manager intervention between the two groups.

Lessons Learned
- Nurse leaders must continue to encourage the contribution of all caregivers and promote a working environment that is conducive to providing safe quality patient centered care.
- Clarification of each group’s roles and heightened awareness of their value to the team serves to empower each individual to perform at their highest level to achieve positive outcomes.
- Have multiple unit based champions both RNs and PCTs on all three shifts.
- One-on-one informal sessions with PCTs is helpful.

Next Steps/What Should Happen Next
- Continue to coach all new staff both RNs and PCTs to this scripted process for change of shift report on CC7.
- Share this experience with PCT and Unit Based Educator Councils.

Survey Questions for RNs
- Within what timeframe do you give report/verbal handoff to the PCT at shift change?
- What do you include in verbal report/handoff to the PCT at shift change?
- How frequently do you check back in with the PCT assigned to you throughout the shift?

For more information, contact:
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