

Depression in Older Adults: Learning to Screen for the Symptoms

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INTRODUCTION

Depression in Older Adults

Problem

According to Allan, Valkanova, and Ebmeier (2014), depression in the older adult is under diagnosed and under treated thus making it difficult to diagnose. Identifying and properly treating depression in the older adult is imperative as it may affect their ability to function independently and limit quality of life (National Institute on Aging, n.d.).

Team Members

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Aim

The aim of the DNP project was to educate nursing staff employed in a long-term care facility to recognize symptoms of depression in the older adult. This was accomplished by participation in training on common signs/symptoms of geriatric depression and the use of the Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS) tool.

REFERENCES



METHODS

This was a quality improvement initiative which consisted of in-person training with all current nursing staff members in the facility. The training consisted of handouts, a power point presentation, and a verbal discussion and was focused on the prevalence of geriatric depression, common signs/symptoms, and the use of the GDS. Participants were asked to complete a 5 question Likert Scale survey at specific intervals of project implementation to rate their knowledge and/or comfort level in specific areas. Twenty-seven nurses participated in the training presentation with 100% completing a pre-education survey and an initial post-test survey immediately following the education. Additionally, twenty-five of the nurses (92%) who participated in the education completed a post-education survey at two weeks after the completion of the training. The initial pre-education survey, the initial post-education survey, and the final post-education survey were analyzed through direct comparison.

RESULTS

The pre-post surveys used a 1-5 scale with 1 indicating a low level of comfort/knowledge and 5 indicating a high level of comfort/knowledge. Following the training, all questions showed an improvement in nursing knowledge and/or comfort level in the tested areas. The most significant results showed an increase in mean response scores from the pre-survey and final survey of 2.9 to 4.5 related to recognition of depression symptoms and 2.0 to 4.8 related to the use of the GDS.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The project demonstrated an increase in nurses' knowledge and comfort level in identifying geriatric depression symptoms following targeted and specific training. The effectiveness of the training could enhance the development of a referral process to establish residents with appropriate mental health resources available within the project facility.

