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Optimizing Rehabilitation Ward Nursing: A Proposed Protocol for Tailored Patient Observations

Topic: Rehabilitation Across the Continuum of Care

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BACKGROUND

This study examines the optimization of nursing care in inpatient rehabilitation through the implementation of a risk-based observation protocol to enhance patient care efficiency. Rehabilitation nurses play a vital role in managing complex medical needs and facilitating patient recovery. However, frequent, non-clinically indicated observations in rehabilitation settings can divert time from direct patient care and disrupt essential rest periods.

METHODS

This project introduced a tailored observation protocol at a private rehabilitation center in Pretoria, South Africa, categorizing patients into high, medium, and low-risk groups. A color-coded sticker system - Red (high risk), Yellow (medium risk), and Green (low risk) - was placed on bedside charts to streamline observation schedules based on patient needs. Nurses received training on the protocol, and its effectiveness was evaluated through pre- and post-implementation surveys.

RESULTS

Results showed a significant improvement in nurses' time management, with 85% reporting a balanced workload compared to 35% before implementation. The protocol positively impacted nursing staff by allowing them to prioritize their efforts more effectively. This strategic allocation of resources contributed to a more balanced workload across shifts. Nurses reported feeling less overwhelmed, as the protocol streamlined their responsibilities, enabling them to conduct effective monitoring without the burden of redundant paperwork.

CONCLUSION

This structured approach enhances patient care quality, ensuring targeted monitoring while allowing more time for therapeutic interventions. It facilitates better communication among team members regarding patient needs, alleviates stress, and improves workflow efficiency. Future recommendations include continuous staff training, periodic reviews, and adaptability of the protocol to evolving patient needs.

Statement of Disclosures

None

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