



Change Theory and Its Impact on Changing Nursing Culture to one of Safe Patient Handling

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Objectives

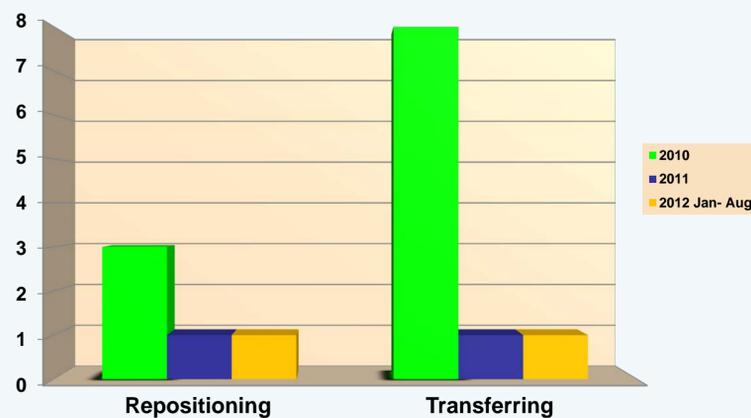
After reading this poster, the learner will be able to:

1. Define how a patient handling equipment program will decrease staff injuries.
2. Demonstrate how an understanding of Lewin's Change Theory will help facilitate culture change.

Problem

One of today's challenges is an increase in obese patients and older nurses working at the bedside longer. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health recommendation is to not lift greater than 35 pounds manually. Patient handling equipment can make it possible to safely lift patients and decrease staff injuries. The organization had no patient handling equipment or program in place prior to 2010.

Patient Handling Injuries in the Pilot Unit



Approach

The pilot unit is an acute care medicine unit in an academic medical center. Many older patients have difficulty with independent transfers. Vendors indicated that staff injuries would be reduced by adding several kinds of patient handling equipment. There would be a need to change the nursing culture from one that accepted injuries as a normal part of the work environment to one that routinely uses equipment.

Interventions

Lewin's Change Theory served as the foundation. In the unfreezing stage staff participated in vendor fairs, presentations, and unit assessments. Patient handling equipment was added incrementally in the first year. During the change stage the unit leadership performed daily unit rounds, gathered success stories to share, and added patient handling to unit education, tours, and interviews. The refreezing stage began with staff routine use of lift equipment.

Findings

Staff injuries related to patient handling decreased by 82% in the year following addition of equipment on the pilot unit. Staff uses equipment routinely. An opportunity exists to decrease risk of injury further with the addition of friction-reducing slide sheets as repositioning aids.

Implications

An understanding of Lewin's change theory helped the unit leadership implement the program that would protect staff and patients. The culture change required commitment from both the leadership team and the staff. Use of patient handling equipment brought a reduction in staff injuries and is allowing nurses to remain healthy at the bedside.



Change stage: patient recovery after fall

Conclusions

Staff injuries are a major challenge for healthcare organizations. If organizations use a similar approach to implement change, and if patient handling culture is changed, and if staff understand the implications to protect their future health, then it is possible to build a successful and fiscally responsible patient handling program.

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