Change of Shift Admissions: Effect on Patient Care

Kara Griffiths, BSN, RN    Lisa Heisey, AAN, RN    Chris Hittie, BS, RN

Introduction
Shift changes are a vulnerable time for patients and nursing staff. To ensure continuity of patient care, critical patient information needs to be communicated in a timely manner. Interruptions during patient handoff, including patient transfers, may threaten the integrity of communication between nurses and delay the completion of critical patient-centered tasks.

PICO Question:

P: Adult acute care patients admitted during change of shift (1830-1930).
I: Admission times.
C: Compared to patients admitted during off times.
O: Affect on timeliness of admission assessments, first medication administration, and skin assessment on arrival.

Question: How do admissions during shift change affect timeliness of admission assessments, first medication administration, and skin assessment on arrival?

Methods
Four days of data were collected from on 6 acute care. Unit data shows a total of 38 admissions and thirteen of those admissions were noted as "arrived onto unit" during change of shift. A chart review was done of the thirteen change of shift admissions compared to a control sample of fourteen admissions at other times. The amount of time between the patient’s arrival to the unit and the time of documentation for admission assessment, first medication administration, and skin assessment on arrival were examined. In addition, patient satisfaction surveys were reviewed, specifically targeting delay of care.

Results
Percentages of Admissions

- Change of Shift (35%)
- All Other Times (65%)
Total: 38

Average Time of Admission Tasks in Minutes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Average Time in Minutes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Admission Assessment</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Medication Administration</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skin Assessment on Arrival</td>
<td>120</td>
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Discussion
A successful patient handoff depends on an exchange of information with minimal interruptions. It is critical nursing staff complete admission assessments, medication administration, and skin assessments in a timely manner. A patient admission or transfer during shift change jeopardizes both processes. A completed literature review reveals a very small body of information. Using data collected on 6 Acute Care, results demonstrate two important tasks are often delayed during change of shift admission: medication administration and skin assessment upon arrival.

Recommendations
- More research is needed.
- Use of a “blackout period”.
- Intra-unit coordination.
- Use of float nurses for admissions.
- Systematic review of Tele-tracking staffing/efficacy.

References
3. Chart Review of Unit Data, Elizabeth Graham, Debra Smith, and Janet Palm, 6 acute care secretaries.