

# **ENHANCING NURSE TEAMWORK AND COMMUNICATION BY IMPLEMENTING NURSE HUDDLES**

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## **Purpose**

The purpose of this project is to enhance the teamwork and communication of nurses on the surgical intensive care unit (ICU) at Santa Clara Valley Medical Center. The specific question of this project was: Would the implementation of shift huddles positively impact the quality of patient care while increasing nurse perception of teamwork as evidenced by a decreased prevalence in unit acquired pressure ulcers and an increase in nurse perception of teamwork on the surgical ICU?

## **Background and Evidence Review**

Effective communication between nurses can significantly improve patient outcomes while increasing staff morale and nurse satisfaction. In acute care settings, communication failures lead to increases in patient harm, resource use, and caregiver dissatisfaction leading to higher turnover rates. Supporting nurses on the unit in understanding the patient care priorities during the shift can lead to better patient outcomes, better teamwork and higher satisfaction. Providing opportunities for staff to express their needs during the shift enhances the effect that each nurse can have on patient care outcomes.

## **Methods**

Surveys were conducted to determine the staff perception of teamwork on the unit pre implementation of nurse huddles. In addition to our current best practices, nurse huddles were added as a means to communicate specific needs of the staff and an opportunity for the charge nurse to update the staff on workflow changes and other unit information. All unit staff nurses were educated on the impact of communication and teamwork on patient outcomes. Nurse huddles were conducted in a structured format at a predetermined time each shift to promote efficiency and effective communication during the huddle. A post survey was completed to measure improvement in staff's perception of teamwork. The incidence/prevalence of pressure ulcers was also collected to determine if the huddles improved patient outcomes.

## **Results**

Analysis of the pre and post huddle nurse teamwork survey identified an increase in clarification of communication, increased belief that teamwork leads to higher quality patient care, and an improved readiness for nursing staff to accept changes in procedures to improve nursing practice. Pressure ulcer prevalence will be completed in June 2010.

## **Conclusion**

Data from the teamwork surveys as well as anecdotal reports from the float nurses demonstrated use of huddles improved staff abilities to provide quality patient care by improving efficiency in completion of necessary patient tasks during their shift through understanding of workflow and resources available. The implementation of huddles can be spread to other units easily and may increase nurse satisfaction, the perception of teamwork,

and improve patient outcomes. The limitation is that veteran unit nurses have trouble recognizing the efficiencies resulting from the use of huddles in decreased interruptions by other less knowledgeable staff. The night shift, which has the highest rate of turnover and new staff, found the huddles to be most beneficial in disseminating information and supporting the new or float nurses.

**Selected References:**

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