

# **DELIRIUM ASSESSMENT IN CRITICAL CARE**

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## **Purpose and PICO Question**

The purpose of this project is to evaluate and select a validated delirium assessment tool for critical care patients and to introduce this tool to critical care nurses at San Francisco General Hospital. Delirium prevention strategies will also be evaluated and proposed.

## **Background and Evidence Review**

Studies have shown that delirium affects 20 to 80% of critical care patients. Delirium is associated with increased ventilator days, increased ICU and hospital length of stays, higher cost of care, long-term cognitive impairment, and a 3-fold increased risk of death. It also can be the first sign of acute illness. Currently there is no screening for delirium in the critical care units at SFGH. Identification of patients with delirium and awareness of prevention strategies could decrease cost and hospital length of stays, prevent long-term cognitive impairment and save lives.

## **Methods**

A survey of critical care nurses was conducted to assess awareness of delirium at SFGH. Current literature on delirium, assessment tools and prevention strategies for critical care was reviewed. A multidisciplinary group was organized to increase awareness and select an assessment tool. Small group classes were implemented to introduce the assessment tool and prevention strategies to critical care nurses. The tool will be incorporated into the clinical setting using laminated copies at the bedside. Assessment results will be added to the Careview computer charting by end of year.

## **Results**

Surveys showed that 93% of critical care nurses believed that delirium is an under diagnosed problem, but only 40% of respondents felt able to assess for it. An even lower number (30%) stated that they knew how to prevent delirium in their patients. After a review of current literature, two validated delirium assessment tools for critical care patients were evaluated. The CAM-ICU was selected. To date, 33% of the staff has been trained on the use of the tool and prevention strategies. Post-training surveys indicate that significant improvements in awareness, assessment and prevention are occurring among critical care nurses who undergo training.

## **Conclusion**

Trials have demonstrated that the CAM-ICU is a quick and effective tool for identifying patients with delirium in a critical care setting. Since delirium is a hospital wide problem, assessment throughout the hospital with the CAM should be considered. Giving a 30-minute class to critical care nurses in a busy unit was a challenge. To achieve the goal

of in-servicing all staff, additional trainers have been recruited. Implementation will be reinforced in annual critical care education.

### **Selected References**

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**Key words:** CAM-ICU, Delirium, Intensive Care Unit, mechanical ventilation.