

Oral Care in the Non-Ventilator Acute Care Population
Abstract-Final Report
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Purpose: There were two primary purposes for this evidence-based practice project. The first was to create and implement a policy and procedure regarding oral care practices in the adult acute care setting, excluding the ventilator-dependent population. The second purpose was to educate patients and staff members on the importance of daily oral care to overall health. The goal was to ensure adequate oral care for patients in order to decrease the risk of aspiration pneumonia and other systemic issues which can arise from poor oral hygiene and which might increase length of stay and cost to the patient and hospital.

Scope: This one –year project began after reviewing current research linking poor oral hygiene with aspiration pneumonia and possibly other systemic problems. A multidisciplinary committee consisting of therapists and nurses met monthly to develop and implement a policy and procedure for oral care . An initial survey was performed throughout the hospital to assess current staff oral care practices. An audit was performed to assess the current oral care practices of our patients and availability of oral care supplies. The committee then created a new oral care policy and procedure for the hospital which was approved by the hospital’s governing councils. The procedure was piloted on 2 patient care units to get feedback and finalize our new policy and procedure. It was then rolled out to non-ventilator patient care units over a 4 week period. Visual alerts and patient education handouts were devised and given to patient care units in the hospital to reinforce the new policy and procedure. A post-implementation survey and follow-up will begin 6 months after the rollout to ensure maintenance and assess sustainability of the new policy and procedure.

Methods: A Policy and Procedure for providing daily oral care for the non-ventilator dependent adult acute care setting was created, approved by the hospital’s governing councils and implemented within one year after the formation of an oral care committee. Staff/patients were surveyed and an audit was completed to assess current practices. Staff and patients were then educated on the importance of providing daily oral care.

Results: The staff survey results revealed that there is little or no education in nursing or therapy programs regarding how to provide oral care. It is not a high priority for staff and there are limited supplies in patient rooms. The patient survey results revealed that most patients brought oral care supplies from home, the supplies were not in the room or within reach. The patients were not asked if they had completed oral care within 72 hours of admission and were not educated on importance of daily oral care by staff. As a result of these surveys the new policy and procedure was implemented to all non-ventilator acute care patients. Visual alerts are in place in all rooms to ensure patient awareness of importance of completing oral care daily. A follow-up audit will be performed to assess changes and ensure maintenance of new policy and procedure.

Key words: Oral care, Adult acute care setting, patient education, policy and procedure.