

Triage Improvement on Intermediate Units

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Introduction

Anecdotal observations on the Intermediate Units (IU) indicate that patients in the IU units are not being triaged as efficiently as possible. Nurses and doctors may benefit from education and interventions, such as assessment tools, that focus on appropriate transition from the IU when the patient no longer meets criteria that indicates a higher level of care is needed. Research shows that expediting patients out of the IU in a timely manner decreases patient length of stay (LOS) and hospital costs.

Methodology

Audits were conducted on IU patient charts that focused on LOS in an IU unit and whether they were appropriate to be in the IU during that time based on certain criteria. A survey monkey was sent to IU nurses to assess their level of awareness and education regarding IU triage criteria. We created an acuity tool and dispersed it to IU nurses on 6IU and 7IU via their clinicians. We created small laminated cards and posted them on the WOW carts on these floors as well to remind nurses of IU discharge criteria and to heighten their awareness.

Results

We audited a total of 18 charts collected from two 6IU and 7IU over a 3-month timespan that showed a collective total of 21 extra days spent in the IU. Our Survey Monkey showed that some nurses were not well versed on IU discharge criteria (9.52%), some nurses felt that physicians would not order to transfer their patients out of the IU without prompting (80.95%), and some nurses admittedly did not assess the need of their patient's IU status every 4 hours (26.19%). The clinicians on 6IU and 7IU are currently utilizing the acuity tools daily to help them assess which patients may be discharged from the IU.

DOES YOUR PATIENT MEET CRITERIA TO TRANSFER TO LOWER LEVEL OF CARE?

Stable blood glucose levels

No active gastrointestinal bleeding

Stable neurological assessment

Hemodynamic stability

No medications requiring IU monitoring

Stable oxygenation and ventilation

Call the physician to discuss. For additional details see Policy HAM-PC-NSG-82

Conclusion

This is an ongoing project that will continue to focus on education to nurses and, in the future, physicians. We will review the effectiveness of our acuity tool and WOW reminder cards. We plan to conduct another Survey Monkey to assess for any improvement regarding education and awareness of IU triaging among nurses. We will audit charts again on 6IU and 7IU to see if LOS in the IU has decreased. If the data indicates that our interventions were unsuccessful, it will be determined why, and a new plan will be developed.