

Therapeutic Communication in Mental Health: Quality Improvement

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(10-07-2022)

Therapeutic Communication in Mental Health

In this paper, I would like to discuss therapeutic communication strategies used in psychiatric patients. Within a Nurse-Client relationship, therapeutic communication is critical whenever one must care for a patient needing psychosocial intervention. The start of the client-patient interaction is establishing trust while using therapeutic communication skills to gather information from the patient. However, therapeutic communication in mental health facilities remains poor, resulting in poor patient outcomes. Quality and Safety Education for Nurses (QSEN) can enhance poor therapeutic communication by targeting and improving nurses' skills (QSEN Institute, 2020). QSEN is a program that aims to improve quality and safety in all healthcare systems while preparing nurses with the knowledge, skills, and new attitudes towards situations (QSEN Institute, 2020). The quality and safety competencies that QSEN aims to develop are patient-centered care, teamwork and collaboration, evidence-based practice, quality improvement, safety, and informatics (QSEN Institute, 2020). Using the skills from the QSEN into therapeutic communication may enhance a patient's overall outcome.

Article Summary

In the article "Communication skills training for mental health professionals working with people with severe mental illness" Papageorgiou et al. (2017) explore therapeutic communications effectiveness in mental healthcare members and patients with severe mental health disorders. The patient's understanding of the diagnosis, prognosis, and therapies are the primary concerns when evaluating the effectiveness of communication. Healthcare team members were also evaluated on their skills in communication and understanding of the patient's symptoms, opinions of the prognosis, and side effects. The article used random clinical trials as

selection criteria to assess efficient communication with those who had formal training versus those without training. Therapeutic communication is essential in all aspects of the nurse-client relationship/interaction and can increase patient satisfaction and treatment adherence when communication skills are used effectively. In the article, Papageorgiou et al. (2017) stated that formally trained health professionals received minimal teaching in communication with patients diagnosed with mental health illnesses during the trials. The lack of communication training affects the bridges that must be established, which are building trust and displaying empathy. Trust is the major component to establish with a patient when communicating. Without it, the patient will not relay any or all the information needed to discover the cause of the problem. Not only is trust established, but empathy is displayed during the interaction. Empathy is also an important quality to have and build while interacting with the patient. Empathy allows one to gain a little understanding of what another feels. Poor therapeutic communication impedes a patient from agreeing with a diagnosis or prognosis, which leads to higher poor patient outcomes.

Overview

As mentioned before, therapeutic communication's primary purpose is to collaborate with the patient to effectively assess any information about their physical and emotional wellness/ or principal problems. Papageorgiou et al. (2017) stated that two variables in all communication interactions associated with overall communication effectiveness are an excellent therapeutic alliance and good communication skills. The article's healthcare members' communication skills include active listening, appropriate open and closed questions, summarizing, sign posting, chunking, checking, recognizing, acknowledging, and validating the patient's ideas, concerns, and expectations. Practical communication skills allow a more holistic approach during the

interaction, which allows a patient to be viewed as a person rather than a problem label. Efficient skills may lead to patient satisfaction and understanding/adherence to symptom resolution, depending on how communication is used. They may even reduce the cost of shorter lengths of stay in ICU units, hospitals, and facilities. Nurses use the QSEN competency to improve quality and safety for nurses by using data to monitor outcomes and use improvement methods to enhance overall care.

Factors such as skills, attitude, and knowledge affect the outcomes of the interaction from start to finish. Skills are needed to know what can be done to obtain information such as health history and present problems. Attitude during the interaction is a primary factor because it can influence a patient to be less able to communicate openly due to feelings of unimportance. Knowledge is used to inform the patient of any information relevant to the problem, interventions, and post-resolution of symptoms. Papageorgiou et al. (2017) stated that patients with severe mental health problems often experience poor therapeutic communication, leading to adverse outcomes and overall poor experience. As such, during an interaction with patients, a nurse should carefully consider factors such as attitudes, skills, and knowledge to enhance the nurse-client relationship.

Quality Improvement

Nurses use the QSEN competency quality improvement during the interaction at the point of admission and end of discharge. Other situations that require careful communication are commonly found in de-escalation. During the implementation phase of care, a patient might have many questions and anxiety about the intervention needed to address the ongoing problem. In the Pre-implementation stage, they might want to receive information and be asked about their intervention goals. Education of the intervention allows the patient's negative feelings to be

addressed and increases the patient's engagement level. In the Intra-implementation stage, the patient would want to know how the interventions work. During the implementation, providing a detailed plan on how the intervention will be carried out shows the patient beneficence. In the post-implementation stage, the patient and nurse present confirmation on whether or not the intervention has met goals. Evaluation outcomes depend on patient satisfaction, which can vary by the interventions given. Increasing effective therapeutic communication within any institution (especially the training) may positively impact patient care financially, patient/nurse satisfaction, and nurse/patient safety. Higher adherence to the mental patients' overall care can lead to increased levels of safety for both the patient and nurses by de-escalating the negative emotions when actively listening to them and exploring specific phrases that allow them to be more understood. Higher satisfaction in both the nurse and patient is present; the patient senses that all interventions are in their best interest and are patient-centered on the principal problem. Nurses' satisfaction increased when the patient was more relaxed and willing to adhere to the regimen.

Application to Nursing

Therapeutic communication is a primary key when ensuring the patient obtains a good outcome during the entire interaction. However, there are specific times when communication can oppose a challenge to some professionals, such as if the staff is using a skill appropriately, and depending on how it is interpreted, the patient may respond negatively.

Practice

Phelps (2020) stated that the best skill to develop when using therapeutic communication skills in practice is using nonverbal skills, such as tone of voice, body language, proxemics, eye glance, and appearance. Nonverbal skills are often used when people with a mental health condition exhibit exacerbations of behaviors or acutely deteriorating health statuses.

Education

The general guideline to improve communication when interacting with the patient includes: paying attention to body language, offering themselves, making time for the patient (especially when in distress), and encouraging communication by using open-ended questions (Papageorgiou et al., 2017).

Research

As communication furthers and develops more every day in mental health, one of the biggest priorities that must be addressed is having more concrete training in communication within facilities. Papageorgiou's (2017) article states that facilities have very little standard training for communication. Communication is essential for the overall care of the patient, safety, and patient outcomes. Resources are another factor that can play into receiving better formal training on communication with mental health patients.

Conclusion

The quality improvement of the QSEN competency aims to promote better healthcare education in quality and safety. They are essential in achieving high-quality care while maintaining the ethical values of the nursing profession. Quality improvement factors include knowledge, skills, and attitudes/behaviors. Knowledge is used in how one relays information to the patient for physical or emotional support while giving autonomy to the course of the care plan with all information in hand. Skills elicit sensitivity and respect towards the patient when implementing the care plan. Attitudes can be viewed as showing empathy and respect for the patient's values and expressions toward the overall situation. Poor therapeutic communication can impede the overall nurse-client interaction causing a halt in the assessments to obtain more information. Ineffective communication can lead to poor patient outcomes as the person with a mental health condition feels misunderstood and may even cause an increase in exacerbation of behavior outbursts which causes safety and treatment adherence to be impaired.

References

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