

Improving Education about Opioid Use Disorder

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Quality improvement in nursing is essential because it allows nurses to identify areas that are in need of improvement and create strategies to improve those areas. Quality improvement is “the systematic approach to evaluating and enhancing healthcare practices,” which involves researching areas that need improvement and applying the knowledge gathered to create new skill sets and set new behaviors to handle problems within that area (Kakacek, 2023). Quality improvement relates to the QSEN core competencies of patient-centered care, evidence-based practice, and safety. Patient-centered care is the core of quality improvement, it uses evidence-based practice to safely provide adequate care to patients. A topic that could be helped by improving quality care is opioid use disorder. According to the CDC (2024), opioid use disorder can be categorized by using opioids in larger amounts than prescribed, craving opioids, and continuing opioid use despite having interpersonal problems (*Opioid Use Disorder: Diagnosis*, 2024). Opioid use disorder has become a major problem. To help patients with opioid use disorder, practitioners need to become educated about the disorder and treatments used so that they can effectively help their patients. Opioid use disorder impacts communities all over the world. Opioid related deaths have increased over the past 25 years. To help with this problem, nurses can create strategies and build on their knowledge to improve the care given for those who suffer from opioid use disorders.

Article Summary

In the article “Enhancing Knowledge and Attitudes Regarding Opioid Use Disorder Among Private Primary Care Clinics”, the researchers used multiple teaching methods to educate family nurse practitioners about opioid use disorder. They used test-enhanced learning and questionnaires to determine the knowledge and attitudes of the practitioners used in the study. They provided education to the family nurse practitioners about caring for patients with opioid use disorder and then evaluated the knowledge and attitudes once again. The article stated, “using modalities such as test-enhanced learning, showed a favorable impact on knowledge and attitudes” (Jassar et al., 2023, p145).

Introduction

In British Columbia, the opioid crisis has become worse after the COVID-19 pandemic. In December 2021, the BC Coroners Service reported 220 lives lost to opioid overdose, the highest number in a single month in British Columbia’s history (Jassar et al., 2023). Barriers to treating opioid use disorder are described in the article as being lack of knowledge and training, lack of time, and stigmas. The project done in this article is focused on the problems of limited knowledge and the negative attitudes about opioid use disorder. The purpose of the project as stated by the article is to “ascertain the influence of providing barrier-targeted and evidence-based education to FNPs employed among private PCCs” (Jassar et al., 2023, p146).

Overview

The article “Enhancing Knowledge and Attitudes Regarding Opioid Use Disorder Among Private Primary Care Clinics” directly relates to the topic chosen. The topic is about improving

education about opioid use disorder and the journal article is about enhancing education for nurse practitioners in primary care settings about treating opioid use disorder. According to the article the quality of care for patients with opioid use disorder in the primary care setting is unacceptable. The article also focuses on the attitudes surrounding opioid use disorder. The article relates to quality improvement because it addresses problems such as lack of knowledge, attitudes, and stigmas surrounding opioid use disorder and develops interventions to improve the outcome for patients who suffer from opioid use disorder.

Quality Improvement

Not only could the quality improvement effort be used within the primary care setting, but it could also be used within hospital, outpatient, and long-term care settings. It also could be greatly beneficial for mental health care services settings. During the pre-implementation stage, educators, who have a background of knowledge about opioid use disorder, would need to be recruited to perform the service of teaching about the disorder. During the intra-implementation stage, education would need to be given. Finally, during the post implementation stage, further education would need to be provided as well as certain testing to determine what was learned throughout the teaching.

Application to Nursing

For opioid use disorder many changes can be made in the nursing field to help combat this disease. First, education is especially important. Educating nurses and other care providers about what opioid use disorder is and how to treat it is the main thing that needs to be done. Second, evaluating the education received and applying it to practice is crucial for understanding that nurses know how to not only treat this disorder, but also how to provide the best possible

care to patients who may be suffering from opioid use disorder. Nurses should receive the best possible education on this topic so that they can help try to prevent and treat the problem.

Practice

The best or preferred practices in nursing for opioid use disorder are using screening tools, using behavioral interventions, and medication treatment. Some of the screening tools that we as nurses use for opioid use disorder are the Kreek-McHugh-Schluger-Kellog and the DSM-5 opioid use disorder checklist (Brown & Capili, 2020). Some of the behavioral interventions used are motivational interviewing and cognitive behavioral therapy (Brown & Capili, 2020). Motivational interviewing helps the patient suffering from opioid use disorder to work for change and helps develop their motivation for that change. Cognitive behavioral therapy helps the patient identify their triggers for using. Finally, medications such as methadone can be used to help with opioid use disorder.

Education

Currently there isn't necessarily a set standard for educating nurses on opioid use disorder. Although there isn't a set standard for education on this topic, there are many educational courses or classes that nurses can take to become knowledgeable about this topic such as online courses from many different sources. Nurses should take initiative to learn about this disease on their own if education is not provided by either school or an employer. Education about opioid use disorder is especially important as the stigma behind patients who suffer from opioid use disorder needs to change.

Research

The priority for further study on opioid use disorder is one of utmost importance, especially at a time when opioid use disorder is endemic in the United States. There has been a lot of research done on this topic and nurses should be educated continuously about taking care of these patients. Nurses play an essential role in assessing pain and helping to treat the pain. They should understand the effects of medications that can be given for opioid use disorder, as well as knowledge about nonpharmacological treatments. Further study can be done to help with pushing for education for nurses and evaluating the effectiveness of that education.

Conclusion

Opioid use disorder has become a major problem, not just in the United States, but globally. Nurses need more education and training for taking care of patients who suffer from this disorder. Some research has been done to evaluate the effectiveness of different educational means for nurses, as well as what interventions can be put into place. Most nurses provide direct patient care and due to this their contributions are needed to help combat the problem of opioid use disorder. New policies can also be put into place for nurses to follow as a general guideline when caring for patients who have opioid use disorder. Although there lacks education for nurses on this topic, research is being done to try to help improve education for nurses and will continue to help nurses understand what interventions they can implement to help these patients.

References

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