

The use of meaningful activities to reduce aggressive behavior in an adult involuntary mental health unit.

Flora Chong^{1,2}, Kim Yeak^{1,3}

¹Armadale Health Service, Perth, Australia. ²Simplify Health, Perth, Australia. ³Bentley Health Service, Perth, Australia

Abstract

Background

To demonstrate the effectiveness of meaningful activities on a ward with aggressive mental health services consumers. This quality improvement project was conducted in a 5 bed locked unit with consumers admitted under the mental health act. Consumers usually experienced high levels of agitation resulting in aggressive behaviour. Many factors contributed to the agitation which included a lack of meaningful activities on the ward, limited occupational therapy staff to facilitate programs and a lack of opportunities for nursing staff to interact meaningfully with the consumers.

Method

Meaningful activities program was facilitated by nursing staff 3 times a day for 3 months. The types of activities, consumer's interactions were recorded. Occupational therapist provided 4 training sessions to the nursing staff on how to facilitate the activities prior to the commencement of the program.

The outcome measures used were:

- 1) The number of seclusions required to manage agitation.
- 2) The number of PRN for benzodiazepes administered to decrease agitation

Data were collected 3 months before the intervention and during the 3 months the program was implemented.

Discussion/Outcomes

The implementation of meaningful activities had substantially reduced the level of agitation and physical aggression on the ward. During the 3 months of intervention the number of seclusions reduced by 60% and the number of PRN administered reduced by 40%.

Nursing staff also reported improved patient relationship when given the opportunity to engage in therapeutic activities with the patients.

Conclusion

The results of this study increased the usefulness of meaningful activities and its importance for the wellbeing of involuntary patients. Subsequently 3 months later, funding became available to employ a full time occupational therapy assistant allocated to this locked unit to assist the nursing staff. The activities program continued to run facilitated by a combination of nursing and occupational therapy staff.

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