Medication Side Effects Education Improves Patient Satisfaction Scores in a Telemetry Unit
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Background / Significance
- In our Telemetry unit, inconsistent patient education was provided regarding medication indication and side effects.
- This is reflected in patient responses to the post-discharge satisfaction question on the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) survey.
- "Before giving you any new medicine, how often did the staff tell you what the medicine was for? How often did hospital staff describe possible side effects in a way you could understand?"
- Unit composite scores were <50
- Our goal is to attain a composite score >50 and to improve medication education for our patients.

Interventions / Creative Solutions
- A hand-out (in English & Spanish) was developed with the following elements:
  1. Drug classification and action
  2. Common medications (generic/brand name)
  3. Top 5 side effects for each drug classification
  4. Educational tips for drug interactions and alternative medication
- Individual patient handouts are kept in patient education trays at the bedside.
- When a new medication is ordered, nurses retrieve the handout and highlight the drug class, medication name and side effects for the new medication. The information is reviewed with the patients.
- Teach back is done to determine patient understanding with every medication administration.

Results / Outcomes
- Patient rooms have signs to prompt patients to ask nurses why they are taking medications and what are their potential side effects.
- After this new process was implemented, the HCAHPS composite score for medication communication increased by 43%.
- This practice change has been implemented house-wide due to its significant success.

Conclusion
- Patient feedback has been positive; "It’s easy to read”. I can understand it and remember”.
- Managers conduct random audits; HCAHPS scores are monitored and posted to keep the staff appraised.
- Evaluation is ongoing and as improvements are seen, new goals are set. One of the goals is to sustain this initiative through consistent utilization by every RN upon each medication administration.

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