



Can we talk? A person-centred approach to medication management in an acute psychiatric ward

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Project background

The Tobernaveen Centre in Antrim, Northern Ireland falls under the Northern Health and Social Care Trust. It is a 14-bed acute inpatient unit for patients aged 65 and over with functional mental illness. Care is carried out by doctors, nurses, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, social workers and advocates. The impetus for this project was a growing realisation that medication administration rounds were heavily influenced by rituals and routines, and were lacking therapeutic or patient engagement. Some staff were seen as medication ‘experts’ while others didn’t have the confidence to do the medication rounds. It was recognised that medication management could be a time for therapeutic engagement to help prevent relapse and readmission for some people. The project team, made up of the ward manager, deputy manager and staff nurse, worked together to engage staff and patients and to enable a more person-centred approach to medication administration.

Aims and objectives

The aim was to develop a more person centred approach to medication management in an acute psychiatric ward. To achieve this, the objectives identified were to:

- Review the existing process for medication administration
- Listen to staff and patient perspectives
- Develop and introduce a more person-centred process for medication administration
- Evaluate the new process

Implications for practice

- Understanding people’s values and beliefs can be a good exercise to start a project journey
- Listening to staff and patient perspectives highlights what is important to them
- Reorganising the medication administration process can allow more time for therapeutic interactions

This project was supported by the FoNS Patients First Programme in partnership with The Burdett Trust for Nursing

Online

Further information about the project can be accessed from: fons.org/library/report-details?nstdid=71796

Key activities and outcomes

• Values and beliefs

The project team undertook a values and beliefs clarification exercise with staff/team members (mainly nurses) to explore everyone’s values about the care provided on the ward in relation to medication administration. As part of this exercise the project team encouraged everyone to think of the patients’ perspectives and try to understand what patients really wanted to achieve within their recovery.

The values that came out of the exercises were:

- We wish to have a caring, compassionate environment with openness and transparency, respecting patients’ wishes
- We aspire to be an area of excellence for both staff and patients
- Patients should be at the centre of all decision making

• Patients’ perspectives

At the start, the project team conducted an information-gathering session and asked patients about their experiences. This was carried out through informal discussion at staff and patient meetings.

Patients said they:

- Wanted to know who is looking after them as early as possible (named nurse)
- Wanted to know more about their medicines
- Would like more privacy

• Staff perspectives

The project team gathered staff perspectives during team meetings, daily briefings and through informal chats.

In summary, staff said they:

- Would like to use medication administration time as a health promotion and recovery tool
- Would like the opportunity to discuss and assess a person’s mental state as soon as possible
- Believe privacy and confidentiality should be upheld during medication administration
- Feel their own morale would be lifted by doing the above, as well as having a sense of achievement

• The project journey so far

Each of the nurses now administers the medication for their own patients, four to five times a day. Nurses use this time as an opportunity to interact therapeutically and assess the patient’s mental state. Patients are able to interact with their named nurse more often during the day.

There are no longer ‘medication nurses’ who do all medications all of the time. Giving each nurse responsibility for own their patients has resulted in an increase in confidence and skills in the safe administration of medication.

IMPROVEMENT INSIGHTS