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Effects of Art from the Heart on Nurse Satisfaction and Patient Well-Being

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**INTRODUCTION**

High patient to nurse ratios lead to decreased job satisfaction and increased burnout, which affects quality of care. Burnout is a significant problem in the nursing community, which is up to four times greater than average for all US workers. Nursing social competency is necessary for listening, empathy, making time for patients, behavior and attitudes.

Art programming has been shown to positively affect unit culture, quality of care and nursing practice. It increases well-being, reduces stress, and enhances nurse-patient communication by promoting social relationships. It also improves patient compliance with recommended treatments.

Art from the Heart (AFTH) is a collaboration between Burlington City Arts (BCA), UVM Medical Center (UVMMC) and volunteers, which provides art supplies, visual art, and patient “About Me” pages to patients, families and employees.

The objective of this study is to assess the efficacy of AFTH through exploring nurse staff perceptions, understanding and attitudes towards the program.

**METHODS**

- 28 interviews of nursing staff perspectives were conducted on Baird 4, an adult inpatient ward, at UVM Medical Center.
- A 19 question survey using Likert scales and short answer formats was administered via structured interviews. Questions assessed perceptions of the utility of art on patient anxiety and pain, effects on communication, as well as job satisfaction and burnout.
- The surveys were analyzed to extract major and minor themes.

**RESULTS**

- **Art From the Heart improves patient well-being and nurse satisfaction**
  
  “Sometimes it’s a way to connect with a patient and it’s not there you miss that opportunity.”

  “It brightens up the room and makes patients happy…and if patients are happy everybody’s happy.”

  “…it definitely helps people cut out their...and I think it makes a lot easier on us, because we have a lot of things to be doing.”

  “…it provides the opportunity for patients to talk of their stress or why they are here.”

  “It gives them somebody to tell their passions to, somebody to talk to, an actual physical being that cares to be there.”

  “…I was able to draw something for him and it calmed him down. And it actually made him happy for days.”

- **Figure 1:** AFTH positively impacts nursing environment and relationships with patients.
  - Provides Connection & Promotes Conversation
  - Improves Productivity
  - Serves as an Outlet
  - Provides Comfort & Happiness
  - Benefits Dementia Patients

- **Figure 2:** Impact of AFTH on patient well-being as perceived by nursing staff.
  - Helps patients to think of something they can still do, it keeps people out of bed, and helps them focus.

- **Figure 3:** Baird 4 nursing staff overwhelmingly reported that AFTH helps with initiating patient conversation, seeing patients as individuals, removing stress from providers and improving the sense of community among co-workers.

- **Benefit of AFTH:**
  - **Connection & Conversation**
  - Provides major themes related to nurse satisfaction. It was research performed with art programming. AFTH’s positive effects on nurses likely reduces burnout and improves retention.

- **Second major theme was AFTH’s effect on patient wellbeing. Patient attitudes towards nurses were strongly improved by AFTH in 17 out of 27 cases, which is congruent with prior research showing art programming’s positive impact on patient stress and nurse-patient communication.**

**DISCUSSION**

Burnout is a problem that significantly impacts the nursing community. AFTH evoked several major positive themes related to nurse satisfaction. It was reported by nursing staff to enhance relationships with patients, create community among coworkers and decrease stress. This is consistent with prior research performed with art programming. AFTH’s positive effects on nurses likely reduces burnout and improves retention.

The second major theme was AFTH’s effect on patient wellbeing. Patient attitudes towards nurses were strongly improved by AFTH in 17 out of 27 cases, which is congruent with prior research showing art programming’s positive impact on patient stress and nurse-patient communication.

**CONCLUSION**

AFTH provides positive benefits on Baird 4 by:

- Reducing nursing staff stress and perceived patient anxiety
- Improving communication, perceived patient mood and health.
- Creating a sense of community, possibly reducing rates of burnout.

Limitations: Our study included a small sample size with a high turnover rate on the unit, as well as a lack of knowledge or accessibility to the program.

**SUGGESTIONS**

- AFTH should be included in new Baird 4 staff orientation
- Art kits should be provided at the nursing station
- A contact sheet at the nurse’s station of who to contact and where to find additional supplies
- This program should also be expanded to other adult in-patient floors.

**REFERENCES**

