

Why care about oral care

PSFDH Oral Care Protocol

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Preventing Complications Brag and Steal
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Importance of Oral Care?

- Poor oral health has been linked to chronic health conditions such as:
 - Respiratory disease;
 - Aspiration pneumonia;
 - Heart disease;
 - Stroke;
 - Diabetes;
 - Arthritis; and
 - GERD
- This can increase length of hospital stay and therefore overall health costs
- Oral hygiene becomes even more important with those with Dysphagia

Aspiration and Oral Care

- Individuals with Dysphagia are at HIGH aspiration risk
- A proportion of those individuals may in fact never demonstrate overt signs or symptoms of aspiration these are referred to as SILENT aspirators
 - Estimated that 60% of people who aspirate are SILENT aspirators (the source for dysphagia, 2000)
 - Populations at risk for silent aspiration: COPD, stroke, elderly, insulin-dependent diabetic, myocardial infarction, head/neck cancer, trach/vent patients, ALS, Parkinson's Disease, myasthenia gravis, and developmental delay (*Ramsey, D., Smithard, D., & Karla, L., 2005*)

Consequences of Aspiration

- Aspiration pneumonia (*McKenzie, 2007*)
- Exacerbation of COPD; which can further increase aspiration risk and recurring complications (*Gross et al., 2009; McKinstry, Tranter, & Sweeney*)
- Pulmonary fibrosis (as a result of frequent/reoccurring infection) (*McKenzie, 2007*)
- Mortality (rates increase 9 fold) (*Martin-Harris et al., 2005*)
- Longer, more complicated and more costly health care stays.

Oral hygiene and aspiration

- **Why is this important?**

- **Poor oral care is high predictor** for *aspiration pneumonia* - especially for those who are dependent for oral care or those with poor/decayed dentition
- Since bacteria grows in the mouth then patients are not only aspirating their saliva but also their oral bacteria - this puts them at greater risk for infection
- Therefore, although good oral care is important for all patients, it is even MORE important for those with dysphagia or those dependent on others for their oral care
 - Stroke patients typically fall within this area: they are more likely to be dependent on others for their oral care and they are more likely to have some level of dysphagia

Targeting better oral care at PSFDH

- Oral Care Protocol Targets: Nursing staff
- Why?
 - Improving patient health and practice standards
 - Always looking for ways to improve
 - Inconsistency with procedure across different staff – decided to make it more prescriptive.
- Aim:
 - To make oral care procedure more standardized across all staff
 - Reduce health complications for patients secondary to dysphagia and poor oral hygiene

Changes Made

- Re-vamped the **PSFDH Oral Care protocol** (updated it in terms of what best practice guidelines recommend) and purchased **suction toothbrushes** to be used with high risk patients
- Provided in-services with nursing staff to review changes of the protocol and the suction toothbrushes
- New protocol was distributed and posted in the nursing stations
- Demonstrations of protocol and use of suction toothbrushes



Measurement

- Quantitative measurement was not taken
- Qualitative Data:
 - Patients with dysphagia – overall less complications secondary to infections
 - Observable better oral hygiene in those patients being actively followed by SLP
 - Nursing staff actively seeking out Suction Toothbrushes for medically complex patients

Successes, Challenges & Opportunities

- Successes

- Better patient care
- Better consistency of oral care
- More standardization of oral care procedures
- Less health complications in medically complex patients
- Tooth brushes augment practice and outcomes in particular for complex patients

- Challenges

- Any change is difficult
- Being able to provide demonstration to all nursing staff who are interested – limited SLP hours
- Observing protocol with patients who do not have Dysphagia
- Tooth brushes - barrier of cost as they are not used regionally

Successes, Challenges & Opportunities

- Any further opportunities?
 - Measuring oral care for patients without Dysphagia
 - In-servicing and training for nursing students
 - Making specific “team leaders” and have them take the lead on training staff
 - Increasing awareness of the importance of oral care amongst the intergenerational nursing staff, as it does not consistently get covered off or at least emphasized in all the nursing curriculums.

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