Nurse Driven Palliative Care Consults in the ICU
Ellen McCarthy, DNP, MSN, RN, CCRN; Meigan Amaral, MSN, RN, CCRN; Meaghan Boulger, MSN, RN, CCRN

Background
- Patients admitted to the ICU have serious illnesses with complex medical needs
- Patients and families need support with decision making and care options
- Improving access to palliative care promotes alleviation of nurses’ moral distress (Hilton, 2020)
- Evidence supports involving the palliative care team within 48 hours of admission to the ICU:
  - decreases overall length of ICU and hospital stay
  - reduces ICU mortality rates
  - reduces health care costs
  - improves the quality of life for patients (Ma et al., 2019)

Problem
- Lack of standardized criteria to identify patients in need of a palliative care consult (PCC)
- When PCCs initiated, it was very late in the patient’s stay
- Consults must be initiated by a provider in the organization

Project Objective
- The purpose of this nurse led initiative was to improve the rate of Palliative Care Consults for ICU patients

Practice Change/Implementation Process
- Implement use of the Palliative Performance Scale (PPS)
- Educate nurses and providers
- Recruit PPS champions
- Enhance workflow to ↑ compliance
- Discuss PPS results in rounds/handoff

Outcomes
- PPS/ PPC Process
  - Incorporated into ICU orientation
  - Added to the Daily Rounding Bundle
  - Created a Best Practice Alert for PCC
- Successful Practice Change
  - In CY22, a culture shift among the ICU interdisciplinary team led to an increase in palliative care discussions occurring with patients and families early in the ICU stay

Next Steps
- Disseminate practice to inpatient medical-surgical units
- Collaborate with healthcare system colleagues to advance consistent use of the PPS
- Advance education for clinical nurses to improve palliative care

Conclusion
- Critical care nurses are change agents at the local and system levels
- Use of the PPS is an effective strategy to improve the rate of ICU PCC at the local level and to exceed the national benchmark

Results
Implementation of the PPS increased the number of unique ICU patient PCCs

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