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Abstract

Background and Purpose: Nearly 18 veterans die by suicide each day. Nurses are in a unique position to address and prevent suicide, but some lack confidence and expertise in suicide prevention especially in inpatient medical-surgical settings. This project aimed to determine the effect of an educational intervention on nurse self-efficacy to screen and manage suicide risk on an oncology medical-surgical unit at a mid-Atlantic Veterans Health Administration's (VHA) medical center.

Methods: The project used a one-group pretest-posttest intervention design. The intervention was a one-hour, face-to-face training to build suicide prevention skills. Participants included 30 VHA nurses, and 22 pre- and 22 post-intervention chart audits. Measures included an 18-item Risk Assessment and Management Self-Efficacy Scale (RAMSES), which measured self-efficacy to assess, manage, and refer suicide risk, and protocol completion and referral rates. Analyses included descriptive statistics and Mann Whitney-U.

Results: All three RAMSES subscales showed a statistically significant ($p<.01$) increases including 31% increase in assessment, 41.2% in increase management, and 55.5% increase in referral self-efficacy. The suicide screening completion rate remained consistent at 83.7% in both the pre-test and post-test timepoints. Referral completion rate in both the pre-test and post-test timepoints indicated that the appropriate referral procedure was followed in 100% of the cases.

Conclusion: This QI project showed that an evidence-based suicide prevention education intervention can increase self-efficacy to manage suicide risk among nurses in an oncology medical-surgical unit at the VHA. These findings were consistent with a body of evidence in the literature showing suicide prevention education programs increase self-efficacy and competency among nurses.

Implications: Nurses must possess skills in screening, management, and referral processes in non-psychiatric areas of nursing care in order to detect risk and protect veterans from the tragic outcome of suicide.

Keywords: Suicide prevention education, nurses, oncology medical-surgical, self-efficacy, confidence.