

Abstract

Background and Purpose: The most common surgical complication among older adults is postoperative delirium and often results in increased length of stays, complex discharge needs, and increased readmission rates. Identification of patients at risk is key to prevention of delirium. This quality improvement project sought to increase staff nurses' knowledge of postoperative delirium and assess the utilization of a delirium screening tool, The 4 A's Test (4AT).

Methods: This project utilized a pretest-posttest design to measure delirium knowledge among nursing staff on a medical-surgical unit of a mid-Atlantic community hospital. The intervention consisted of a delirium educational in-service, which was adapted from the Geriatric Resource Nurse curriculum developed by Nurses Improving Care for Healthsystem Elders. Pre- and post-intervention tests were administered to assess participant knowledge of delirium, and test scores were analyzed using a paired *t*-test. Utilization of the delirium screening tool was measured through weekly electronic medical record reports over eleven weeks and analyzed through descriptive analyses.

Results: A total of 30 nurses participated in the study. Results showed a statistically significant ($p=0.002$) increase in delirium knowledge scores after the educational intervention. The average weekly documentation compliance rate was 76% and ranged from 54% to 98% throughout the eleven-week period.

Conclusions: Findings from this project are consistent with literature that support the use of in-person delirium education to increase nurses' knowledge and accuracy of assessments. The wide range of documentation compliance rates show a delayed adoption of a new screening tool, possibly influenced by factors including staffing needs and clinical support for nurses.

Implications: This study shows how nurse-led interventions continue to play an important role in postoperative delirium prevention through early identification strategies.

Keywords: *delirium education, delirium screening, nurse education, postoperative delirium, 4AT*