Medication Safety

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“Medication Safety” are two words that have danced in my head since the beginning of my nursing career. Medication safety is one of several national patient safety goals established the by Joint Commission. The Joint Commission is an organization that accredits hospitals, clinics and health care centers throughout the nation to ensure public safety. The Joint Commission establishes guidelines for healthcare facilities and ensures guidelines are followed. The Joint commission evaluates safety errors for improvements in healthcare. National patient safety goals are healthcare issues that the Joint Commission deems as high priority to preventing harm or death of a patient. Medication safety is the one the nation patient safe goals that greatly impacts nursing care (Cheever & .Hinkle, 2014).

Medication safety involves six key measures when administrating drugs.

These six safety measures are often referred to as the six rights of medication. The six rights of medication includes the right patient, right time, right medication, right route, right dose, and right documentation. All of these rights have significate importance to preventing patient harm. The nurse must ensure that he or she administers the right medication to the right patient. Depending on the drug of choice, improper administration can be fatal. For an example, potassium and heparin are two drugs that have the potential to cause death if they are given to the wrong individual. Potassium has the potential to cause dysrhythmias in a patient if administered to a patient with normal potassium levels. Heparin cause a person to bleed out. Medications also have to be administered at the right time intervals. Administering a drug at the correct time decreases the chance of overdosing a patient and ensures that the medication remains at a therapeutic level. Dilantin is a drug that is used to prevent seizure activity and it has to remain at a therapeutic level to be effective. Nurses must ensure that they administer the correct medication dose. An ineffective amount of medication will have little or no therapeutic effect on the patient whom receives the medication. For an example, if an adult takes a pediatric dose of Tylenol for a headache, he or she is likely to continue to experience the symptoms of a headache because the dosage is too small to cause an effect. Documentation is the sixth right to medication administration. Correct documentation is essential to nursing. When it comes to documentation, it is simple. If a nurse did not document, then he or she did not do it! Nurses should always provide document for the medications that they give. Documentation prevents medication omission errors and decreases the chances of a nurse being sued. Documentation aids in patient care by giving the oncoming nurse insight of previous care, therapy, or treatments performed by the medical staff (Potter, Perry, Stockert, Hall, & Ostendorf, 2017).

Medication safety also involves the nurses’ knowledge of the medications being given to their patients. Dhillon (2014), further supports this statement by stating, “Past experiences indicate that the lack of knowledge appears to be a persistent problem in the occurrence of medication errors”(p. 94). The nurse is responsible for knowing the action of a medication, the side effects of a medication and any adverse reactions of a medication before drug administration. The nurse should make sure that the patient is not allergic to the medication. Understanding how a drug works enables the nurse to monitor the patient for adverse reactions and promptly intervene if necessary. This aspect of nursing is critical in saving lives and is what makes nursing unique from any other profession. Obtaining the knowledge of medications is also helpful during the medication reconciliation process and aids in informing the patient of which symptoms to follow up with their doctors (Potter, Perry, Stockert, Hall, & Ostendorf, 2017).

The six rights of medication and being knowledgeable of medications greatly influences my nursing judgement. I use medication safety on a daily bases when I work as a licensed practical nurse. I always follow the six rights of medication and check the MAR against the medication order three times before I administer any drug. This process has greatly helped me prevent medication errors. Zero occurrences of medication errors keeps patients safe and nurses happy. Medication safety is aspect of nursing that I will practice throughout my nursing career! I understand that I may not be knowledgeable of every drug or healthcare issue that I encounter, however, I do know that as a nurse I am responsible for researching unfamiliar drugs and staying up to date on evidenced- based practices.

References

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