Quality Improvement Project - All Staff - Wash Hands!

Amy Burge - "I pledge"

BSMCON
Quality Improvement Project - All Staff - Wash Hands!

Effective hand hygiene has long been recognized as an important way to reduce the transmission of bacterial and viral pathogens in healthcare settings (Jamal, O’Grady, Harnett, Dalton, & Andersen, 2011). The quality and safety issue is healthcare workers not washing their hands. Nurses are made to sign a commitment paper to wash their hands at the facility where I work. Feedback from most of the nurses on the floor were: “Sign the paper, it doesn’t matter anyways, we will do it just like we have always done it.” Does this mean the nurses wash their hands when they are required to or not? A quality improvement project could be implemented that involved the patients to improve healthcare workers washing their hands.

The most basic thing to reduce the transmission of infections would be for healthcare workers to wash their hands. The WHO Alliance first focused on hand washing as the first Patient Safety Project. This project was a way to reduce transmission of pathogens at a fairly inexpensive cost. Other activities of the Patient Safety Alliance is the “Patients for Patient Safety”. This program gives the patient the knowledge and allows them to become involved in their safety. However, healthcare workers are reluctant to educate the patients because it is a little threatening (Bristol, 2005, p. 973-974).

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate that 1 out of every 20 patients who are hospitalized will contract a hospital-acquired infection (Amer, 2013, p. 17-18). Hand hygiene is vitally important to a patient’s care while in the hospital. Too many diseases are spread through accidental contact. Every day at work as a nurse, many patients ask about their medications, when they will be discharged, and why they cannot walk to the bathroom on their own. The patients should start questioning with: “Have you washed your hands?” This is the single most important question in my mind for the patient to ask of any healthcare worker.
Technology is allowing the patients and their families to be more aware of healthcare issues. Implementing that healthcare workers wash their hands is a hard challenge. Surveillance of physicians, nurses, and other personnel demonstrated a greater frequency of hand washing by nurses (63%) compare with physicians (19%) and other personnel (25%) (Lois & Maryanne, 1986). These statistics are disturbing to anyone reading them. This knowledge is on the internet for anyone to see, and patients can look this up while at the hospital.

In the past couple of months, as a single nurse, I am trying to implement a hand washing quality improvement project. I start out with a saying: “Hi, my name is Amy, I am going to be your nurse today until 7 pm. I ask them what they would like me to call them, then I ask the patient what I am doing.” They say: “You are washing your hands.” I say: “You are right, now do me a favor, I really love being a nurse, and I love taking care of my patients, in order to do that, I need you to help me. Anyone who walks through that door, ask them to wash their hands in front of you.” The patients sometimes have a hesitant look on their face. I add: “Blame it on the nurse, you can even say Nurse Amy said so, I will back you up.” The patients love this. It is a way of being very compassionate about the patient and keeping the patient safe. The patient truly knows that the nurse cares for them. In the past month, I was awarded three daisy compliments, I attribute it to this opening and my love of nursing.

There have been several professional practice implications. In a study of 2,078 patients discharged from 11 Midwest hospitals, patients were reluctant to be involved in making sure their healthcare workers washed their hands. Patients were very comfortable asking general medical and medication questions, but were uncomfortable asking medical providers whether they washed their hands (Waterman et al., 2006, p. 367-370). Another study of 80 patients who had undergone surgery in an inner-city London hospital were willing to ask doctors factual
questions over challenging questions. Whether or not your healthcare provider has washed their hands is a challenging question. It is not a factual question. If the doctor’s instructed the patients to ask, the patients were more willing to ask the healthcare workers challenging questions (Davis, Koutantji, & Vincent, 2007).

In the Nurse Amy quality improvement project, a night shift nurse complained that the surgical unit would need more soap because of Nurse Amy. By evening bedside shift report, the patients were asking the nurses if they had washed their hands when entering the rooms. Implementing a quality project like this is both challenging and fun. One way of reviewing if healthcare workers are washing their hands is the quantity of the hand soaps ordered each month. A hospital can review their purchasing of hand soaps in the past to the current day. Also, hospitals could round on the patients and ask a simple question: “Did everyone wash their hands in front of you when they walked into the room?” The staff knowing that this will be one of the questions asked when the managers round on the patients might make them stop and wash their hands at the right times. Furthermore, the hospital-acquired infection rates could be examined to see if the rate dropped since the hand washing project began.

The healthcare workers will be affected by this project. They must wash their hands! They must educate the patient and allow the patient to become a partner in his/her care. Nurses are sometimes reluctant to do so. If the patient becomes involved in challenging questions, it makes the nurses do their jobs correctly. It takes more work to wash their hands at every appropriate time. Washing their hands will help the patient infection rates lower and the nurse will be less likely to become infected. Washing hands is all about keeping the patient and the healthcare worker safe.
In conclusion, hand hygiene is important for patient-centered care. The aim of this project was clear, decreasing the rate of hospital-acquired infection rates from bacterial or viral pathogens. This quality improvement project includes having the patients ask a challenging question: “Have you washed your hands?” The quality improvement project of Nurse Amy seemed to have a positive effect, this is only one person. I hope in the future, Nurse Amy’s quality improvement project will spread like an infection.
References


http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1525-1497.2005.00385.x
### Hand Washing Data For Hospital Unit Staff & Management

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**Rounding Question Results**

| Did staff wash their hands? | 72% | 82% | 82% | 86% | 88% | 88% | 89% | 90% |

**From the management:**

Keep up the good work, keep washing those hands!

**Below 75%**

- October

**At or Above 75%**

- September

**At or Above 90%**

- November

[Note: The chart includes a line chart that shows trends over time for the data provided.]

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Appendix