Ensuring Stroke Patient Safety

Problem

Acute stroke patients can be classified into those patients with ischemic stroke and those with hemorrhagic strokes. The ischemic variety makes up the majority of strokes accounting for nearly 85% of all strokes with hemorrhagic making up the remainder.

Patients who have had a stroke present a number of care challenges, that if unmet, can lead to a number of safety problems.

Consequence

Stroke patients are at risk of complications associated with mobility, swallowing and toileting.

Solution

Here are some suggested steps to take to address this problem.

- Stroke patients are at risk for all the complications associated with immobility during hospitalization including pressure ulcers, deep venous thrombosis (DVT), and contractures.

- Stroke patients must be mobilized effectively, turned often, and receive appropriate splinting and DVT prophylaxis during their illness and rehabilitation.

- Assist devices can help with ambulation, but these have their own safety risks.

- Stroke patients often experience changes in their speech, language and memory; speech therapy is often prescribed as part of the therapy.

- Swallowing is often affected and should be tested to ensure that the patient can accommodate the diet and does not experience aspiration.

- The inability to communicate and the loss of independence are frustrating for the patients and their family; both can benefit from psychosocial support and intervention.

- Strokes often compromise activities of daily living such as toileting and bathing.
• Stroke patients may retain urine or feces and experience complications such as urinary tract infections and impaction with abdominal bloating.

• Modesty prevents patients from asking for assistance with toileting, and may not attend to these with negative consequences.

• Stroke patients need to be watched as they may attempt to be independent and may fall and injure themselves.

• A stroke is a devastating clinical condition that requires nursing care to prevent complications and to restore the patient’s physical health and quality of life.

References

Avoiding Common Nursing Errors, Lisa Marcucci, MD, Editor, Lippincott Williams and Wilkins, 2010.

Note: A narrated e-Learning module of this Nugget is available at LearningNurse.com.