“I’ve got a bad feeling about this patient.”

Making Use of Clinical Nursing Intuition

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Intuition Defined

- Knowledge of a fact or truth as a whole
- Immediate possession of knowledge
- Knowledge is independent of the usually reasoning process
- An inner knowing – direct perception
- Sensing, feeling, perceiving
- Strength of feeling affects perception
“Nursing” Intuition

- Patricia Benner – 1984
  - From Novice to Expert
- Lynn Rew – 1987
- More the art than the science of nursing
Intuition or Critical Thinking?

- Intuition
  - Immediate knowledge
- Critical thinking
  - A process to gain knowledge
What Do You See? Feel?

- The look of the patient
- Mental changes (especially agitation)
- Usually not one parameter alone
  - Look at the whole picture
  - A facet of critical thinking
- Usually based on sensory stimuli
- “My gut tells me.” “I feel it in my heart.”
Nursing Intuition

- Evidence based practice
- Intuitive based practice
- Differentiation
  - aka Differential Diagnosis
  - Example: A patient who suddenly becomes very confused
Gut Feelings

- Falling out of the pattern
- “This one is not going to do well.”
- What is going on, versus what should be going on
- Acting on “a hunch”
What impedes nursing intuition?

- Not knowing the baseline
- Lack of self-confidence
- Possibly past negative experience
- Immaturity as a nurse*

*Immaturity as a nurse is included as an additional factor.
What helps nursing intuition?

- Knowing the baseline
  - Our repeaters, chronic, re-admits
- “Going with your gut.”
- Asking other nurses
- Asking the parent/family/caregiver

- A culture where intuition is respected
Intuitive Feelings Expressed by Patients

- Patients often know when something is going to happen
  - “I think I’m going to die.”
  - “Call my wife.”
  - “Call out to deceased loved ones.”
  - Sudden agitation or eerie quiet
  - Waiting arrival or departure of family
Other Uses of Nursing Intuition

- Potential abuse of women
- Potential abuse/neglect of children
- Potential abuse/neglect of elderly
- Drug seeking behavior
- “Something isn’t right with that nurse.”
- “Something isn’t right with that doctor.”
Reporting Your Nursing Intuition

- Usually communicated verbally
- Sometimes communicated privately
- Rarely—if ever—documented

Rapid Response Team Calls

- Staff concerned or worried
Reporting Your Nursing Intuition to Physicians

- You must report on intuition
  - Not an option
- Left brain (male physicians)
- Right brain (female nurses)
- The nurses who use intuition consistently have better patient outcomes
Physicians and Nursing Intuition

- Physicians respect it
- Duty to report it
- Clinical practice
- Your experience?
Can “nursing intuition” be taught to a newer nurse?
Can “nursing intuition” be taught to a newer nurse?

- Probably not but... it can be mentored
- Nursing interventions based on intuition
  - “Let’s get this patient done now before something else happens.”
  - “Let’s do this before all hell breaks loose.”
  - Anticipating “just in case” assignments
Four Key Factors in Using Clinical Nursing Intuition

1. Clarify the intuitive experience
2. Reflect on the risks and the benefits
3. Learn more about the skill
4. Support other intuitive nurses
1. Clarify the Intuitive Experience

- “Is this one of those moments?”
- Discuss and describe the experience with experienced and novice nurses
- Explain, ask questions, and value this!
  - “Will you check this patient with me?”
2. Consider the Risks & Benefits of Intuition

- Consider risks of not reporting
  - “What if I don’t say anything?”
- Positive patient outcomes depend on your ability to report this
Failing to act on nursing intuition leads to:
* Guilt, frustration, professional self-doubt
* May over or under react the next time
Nursing intuition is not always a precursor to a negative outcome...
3. Learn More About This Skill

- Discussion increases awareness and sensitivity
- Share the information/share this lecture
- Case presentations
- Participate in research
  - It is difficult to measure
Nursing Intuition in the Literature

- Nearly all clinical nurses use nursing intuition on a daily basis
- Very little is written on the topic for clinical nurses
- Scholarly journals
- Clinical, bedside nursing journals
4. Supporting Other Nurses on Intuitive Situations

- Reassure, respect, nurture, & reward the skill
- Be proud of it!
- Assist in explaining this to those who don’t know about it
- Begin a discussion about nursing intuition
- We want validation!
Case Studies Using Clinical Nursing Intuition
Emergency Nurse Predictions of True Cardiac Emergencies

- Journal of Emergency Nursing 24(6)
- 200 patients studied
- “Is this patient having a true or significant cardiac event?”
- Accuracy rate over 185 patients
- Issues with the study
Cardiac Surgery Recovery Nurses Predictions After Pre-Op Teaching & Evaluation

- Heart & Lung
- 100 Patients
- Predictions of complications: rebleeding, pneumonia, CVA, wound infection, etc.
- Accuracy rate of >88%
Intuitive Experiences with Chronically Ill Children in a Boston Pediatric ED

- Patient Mix: CP, TBI, Anoxic Injuries
- Predictors of UTI, sepsis, pneumonia, prior to onset of symptoms
- 25% identified diagnosis not considered
- JEN 24 (8)
Future Thoughts on Nursing Intuition

- More studies, more evidence
- EMR vs. bedside nursing experience
- Scientific/physiological connections
- Implications for research
- Legal concerns
- *Intuition for Dummies???
Your Experiences with Nursing Intuition???
Thank you,
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