Communicating the Risk of Violence: A Paradigm Shift for Flagging

Subtheme: Tool-kits

Workshop

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Abstract

Background

Employers have a key responsibility to provide all workers at risk of exposure to violence with information, including personal information, about a person with a history of violence so they can be protected. Healthcare workplaces must also develop and implement effective measures and procedures to keep both patients and workers safe when providing person-centred care. A proactive approach that can meet these requirements and communicate the risk of violence involving patients is the implementation of a flagging alert system.

Methodology

PSHSA, a funded partner of the Ontario Ministry of Labour, developed an evidence informed Flagging Handbook to assist healthcare organizations in the development of effective flagging alert systems. This initiative was 1 of 5 resources developed as part of a Violence, Aggression, and Responsive Behaviours (VARB) project, funded by the Ontario Ministry of Labour. Toolkits were developed through multi-stakeholder engagement and expert consultation. Flagging was identified by the VARB steering committee as a key issue for healthcare organizations noting that minimal knowledge and guidance existed. A multi-stakeholder working group reviewed literature, best practices and collaboratively developed the flagging toolkit.

Findings

To implement successful behavioural alert systems a fundamental shift in thinking about flagging is required. Misconceptions must be demystified and perceptions of flagging must shift from the labelling and stigmatization of patients to that of a proactive safety practice approach where visual or other cues are used to communicate the potential risk of violence to caregivers. In addition, healthcare organizations need additional resources regarding what flagging is and is not, the benefits, types, legal and ethical considerations, program development steps, and implementation tools. The PSHSA Flagging Handbook Toolkit provides this necessary information and is presented.

Implications

Adopting and implementing a flagging alert system as a workplace violence prevention practice has the profound ability to keep both patients and workers safe. This can be accomplished with a change in thinking and attitude coupled with knowledge and tools on how to effectively communicate risk of violence. However, healthcare workplaces must carefully consider: patient experience and care needs; patient safety; patient privacy; worker safety and related legislative requirements. A well-developed flagging alert system has the potential for adaptation in many community and healthcare environments.

Workshop

- Presentation 45 minutes
- Presenter 1: 25 minutes – Overview of flagging concepts, legal & ethical considerations, program development and tools
- Presenter 2: 20 minutes – Hotel-Dieu Grace Healthcare's experience developing a flagging program e.g. successes, challenges and barriers
- Active Participation 45 minutes
- Polling questions - 5 minutes flagging issues
- Small group table discussions on 3 major issues to improve insights and overcome challenges - 10 minutes each e.g. preventing stigmatization, flag permanency, flagging visitor violence risks
- Final Remarks/Questions 10 minutes

Learning objectives

Participants will…
1. have a basic understanding of the critical components of an effective flagging alert system structure and implementation.
2. be aware of the delicate balancing of multiple and sometimes competing legislative considerations related to privacy and safety when implementing a flagging alert system.

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