Improving Communication Between Nursing and Pharmacy

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IDENTIFICATION:
The problem was part of a Center for Frontline Nursing initiative involving frequent phone calls by nursing to the pharmacy to retrieve missing doses of medications. The problem was identified by frustration of the ICU nurses over the frequency of medications not available at the appropriate times resulting in overdue medication administration and subsequent phone calls to the pharmacy. Data was collected over a three week period of time by nurses who listed times and reasons for phone calls made to pharmacy.

PROCESS:
Solutions were generated by viewing which medications were being requested most often on the data collection sheet. It was agreed that the pharmacy director would meet with the RN conducting this research and collaborative efforts would be made to develop solutions leading to mutual satisfaction for both departments.

SOLUTION:
It was discovered through the survey that antibiotics were the most frequent missing medication followed by propofal and albumin. The pharmacy director was doing a concurrent study involving antibiotic waste due to reconstituted doses expiring before use. It was decided that the ICU would trial placing unreconstituted antibiotics in the pyxis in order for RNs to have these medications at hand when needed. The ED already had access to the antibiotics in their pyxis but other units did not. The ICU received a second pyxis to house the antibiotic vials and also received extra bottles of propofal and albumin due to the added space that an extra pyxis afforded.

The ICU Intensivist also requested quick access to Norepinephrine that is used frequently in the ICU for hypotensive patients. Normally a written order would be faxed to pharmacy with the delivery time of up to one hour for stat medications. After much investigation, the pharmacy director was able to supply a form of Norepinephrine with a long shelf life in the pyxis refrigerator for easy access in emergent situations.
Results of the implementation were that antibiotics and other frequently used medications are available for administration at the correct times which is particularly important for sepsis patients and Early Goal Directed Therapy. RNs retrieve the vials from the pyxis, label a piggyback bag of saline diluent, spike the vial, reconstitute the antibiotic into the dilutent, and administer the medication to the patient.

**OUTCOMES:**

We have since this implementation gone to electronic medication administration and have not followed up with data on phone calls due to the inherent problems of going online. Antibiotics have now been rolled out to all units for easy access.

Another solution to communication problems as discussed between the pharmacy director and the research RN which has yet to be implemented is the communication process that is possible on the Nurse Monitor or Pyxis Connect feature of the pyxis machine itself. This is an easily accessible feature in which the RN can view each order that was scanned to the pharmacy and any comments made by the pharmacy regarding the order.