

Medication management

Introduction

Medication management is one of the key areas, which need to be taken care of to avoid the readmission of patient to medical unit. Medication management describes a multi-disciplinary approach, where medicines and drugs are prescribed by medical professionals and administered by nurse professionals or sometimes even by the patients themselves (Lee et al 2018). As the primary carers of the patient, nurse professionals are expected to take full accountability of this concern ensuring the correct route of administration, dosage, written documentation and timely administration of prescribed medications to ensure utmost safety of the patient. Newly graduated nurse professionals often find this arduous owing to the burden of transition to nursing practice, which may sometimes lead to medication errors (MacLellan et al 2015). This can cause poor health outcomes for the patient. To avoid this, it is important that new graduate professionals take care of this concern and work on individual strategies to overcome the same. These strategies and issues will be discussed ahead.

Importance of medication management

Provision of safe and quality care is the obligation of nursing professionals towards the patient. The importance of patient safety has even been emphasised by the NMBA (Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia) through their standard 6.1, which states that nursing professionals are expected to provide comprehensive, safe and quality care to the patients in order to achieve goals and outcomes that are responsive towards the needs of the patient (NMBA, 2018). Medication management forms a major part of patient safety since medication errors due to poor management can lead to serious health outcomes for the patient. As per NMBA standard 1.5, nurses are also expected to maintain an ethical framework while decision making, which implies that their practice needs to be safe promoting the beneficence of the patient while not causing any harm to the patient (NMBA, 2018). While registered nurses are highly trained in their roles and work with utmost efficiency, new graduate nurses are often bound to have medication errors. This can be explained with the help of an instance.

Reflection of clinical experience

During my last clinical placement, I was posted within the Emergency ward of the hospital, which involved a continuous interaction with patients, preceptors, registered nurses and

fellow nursing professionals. Due to lack of clinical exposure and training in the practical field, I often faced certain challenges while administering drugs to the patient (ANMF, 2013). One of the major challenges faced by me was related to the use of injectable medications to the patient. While administering intravenous drugs, I faced several issues like preparing the correct dose for the patient, diluting the injectable drug and even while maintaining the sterility of the process. At one particular instance, I forgot to replace the lid of the injectable agent and keep it back in the refrigerator since the drug needed to be stored in a cool temperature. When one of the patients arrived at the ward, I was about to use this agent for administration when I saw that the lid was missing. I immediately rushed to the refrigerator to grab a new container and made sure to discard this one. I then returned to the patient and prepared him for administration, which was all the more challenging for me owing to the medication mistake that I was about to make.

Concerning the safety of the patient, I decided to call out for a registered nurse so that I could work under her guidance for the purpose of drug administration. The registered nurse immediately arrived by the side and guided me through the procedure. She even explained me how I can manage medications in a better manner and make sure that I do not make an error ahead. I thanked the nurse and catered to form strategies to improve my drug delivery skills and pharmacological knowledge to improve patient safety in procedures. This will help me in improving my accountability towards the patient, which will facilitate abidance to NMBA standard 3.4 (NMBA, 2018). Safe and efficient practice through medication management will not only improve patient safety but also help to enhance my clinical practice.

Strategy for improving medication management in practice

These strategies can be described on the basis of challenges faced by newly graduate nurses in the process of medication management. The major causes include inadequate knowledge of drugs, inadequate experience with working with drugs, limited clinical exposure, lack of therapeutic training, inadequate risk perception, poor team management and communication, lack of knowledge of risks related to poor medication management, workload issues and stress, use of high-risk medications and drugs with complex use along with lack of standardised protocol in place (WHO, 2016). Although, standardised protocols have been described by the NMBA and are being coherently followed at the hospital, the remaining factors tend to be challenging for new nurses.

To overcome these shortcomings, the described strategies will involve training and education of new graduate nurses to improve their pharmacological knowledge and training. This can be enabled with the help of daily sessions with trained nurse professionals, who discuss different issues, medications and their use in detail. Along with an improvement in pharmacological knowledge, this strategy must aim at improving the patient knowledge of nurse professionals and acquainting them with the associated risk of poor medication management (WHO, 2016). Not just harm to the patient, they must also be educated about the harm to personal health and issues related to poor medication management like the risk of needle stick injury.

During this education program, it must be ensured that nurse professionals gain an overall knowledge of the correct steps to be followed in the process of medication management, which must include all the particulars from opening of the packaging contents to disposal and storage, so that they do not miss on any of the concerns (ANMF, 2013). Other than this, the importance of team work, coordination and communication must be emphasised and nurses must be educated on how to manage an emergency situation if any of the steps of medication management has not been performed carefully. Further, they must be encouraged and trained to observe the patient and note their findings. Noting patient vitals and important findings before, during and after the process of drug administration will ensure utmost patient safety and lead to minimisation of health risks among them (NMBA, 2018). It will also help nurse professionals in being more aware during the procedure as they note precise values at each step. This will minimise the chances of missing out at any of the steps which are crucial to medication management in nursing.

Concerning team work, nurse professionals must be encouraged to discuss experiences, errors and issues among each other. This will help them in avoiding these concerns during clinical exposure (Chang et al 2015). Improvement of team communication will also help nurses to discuss the possible health risks that could be faced by a patient due to a supposed error and will further put forward how nurse professionals comprehensively dealt with the situation. This will not only help in improving self - confidence of nursing professionals but also will improve their clinical knowledge and patient handling skills, which will prepare them for the real challenges of clinical practice (Lea et al 2015). Another aspect of team work when new graduate nurses enter clinical practice is their guidance by trained registered nurses, particularly with issues relating to medication management (Lea et al 2015). It must be ensured that any qualms of new graduate nurses are immediately catered to by registered

nurses and all the crucial administrations like those of injectable drugs happen under their supervision. High - risk drugs and patients who are at a high risk must not be handled independently by new graduate nurses (ANMF, 2013). These measures will ensure utmost patient safety in procedure and will also improve the process of medication management among fresher graduate nurses.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that medication errors and issues with medication management are common among fresh graduate nurses due to lack of clinical skills and knowledge along with limited pharmacological knowledge. While this is a grave matter of concern for the patient, it also hinders the development of the clinical skills of nursing professionals due to breaching of NMBA standard. For utmost safety of patients and to cater to the professional growth and development of nursing professionals, it is imperative that nurses be educated more about various aspects of medication management. This can be enabled with the help of daily sessions by trained experts and discussion of cases among team members, which will help to improve patient – handling skills of nurse professionals. With proper guidance and supervision, nurses can work together as a team to deliver utmost patient safety, as I did during my clinical placement under the guidance of the registered nurse. This experience facilitated me to deeply understand the aspects of medication management and will certainly help to improve my drug delivery skills in the future through the procurement of these strategies.

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