Delirium: A Nurse’s Primer

Delirium Work Group
2016
Objectives

1. Define delirium and its outcomes.
2. Discuss the importance of the RN’s role in preventing, identifying, and intervening with delirium.
3. Describe ANA’s interest in delirium.
Define Delirium

• Delirium is a serious medical condition, that is preventable in a substantial number of cases \(^1,2\)
• A symptom of acute brain dysfunction
  • Disturbance of consciousness
  • Inattention
  • Disorientation
  • Change in cognition
  • Hallucinations, illusions and delusions
  • Decrease in short-term memory
  • Develops over hours to days
  • Fluctuates over time
Subtypes of Delirium

- **Hypoactive**
  - Least recognized
  - Apathy
  - Lethargy
  - Sedate
- **Hyperactive**
  - Most recognized
  - Restlessness
  - Agitation
  - Combativeness
- **Mixed**
  - Fluctuating periods of both
Delirium Occurs in Many Populations

Occurs in multiple populations, including pediatrics, and:

- 60-80% of mechanically ventilated ICU patients
- 20-50% of non-ventilated ICU patients
- 5-50% of elderly patients following surgery
- Up to 90% of patients with advanced cancer (last days and hours of life)
Call to Action

Delirium is not inevitable!

• Reversible
  • Timely recognition
  • Removal/reduction of cause(s)
  • Appropriate treatment
• The most effective delirium reduction strategies are:
  • Prevention\(^7\)
  • Risk modification\(^8\)
Delirium Impacts Patient Outcomes

• ↑ likelihood of mortality\textsuperscript{9} by 10% for each day delirium persists\textsuperscript{10}

• ↓ quality of life for patients and their families

• ↑ short and long-term negative effects on patients’ functional and cognitive levels\textsuperscript{11}

• ↑ likelihood of long-term cognitive loss\textsuperscript{12}

• ↑ ICU and hospital length of stay

• ↑ post-hospital institutionalization

• ↑ healthcare costs
RN’s Make a Difference: The Nurse’s Role

- **Screen** Patients for
  - Risk Factors
  - Precipitating Factors
- Institute **Prevention** Strategies
- **Assess** for and Recognize Delirium
- Implement Prompt and Appropriate **Intervention**
  - Non-pharmacological
  - Pharmacological
Why is ANA involved?

- Nursing excellence through ethics, standards, and **best practices**
- Improve quality of patient care
- Member interest
- Expand ANA resources
- Topic of interest to all nurses in multiple settings
ANA’s Delirium Work

• Collaboration with American Delirium Society

• Creation of steering committee and delirium work group

• Delirium survey of ANA members

• Website and resources
American Delirium Society

• Collaborating with ANA
• Members of the Steering Committee
• Society was incorporated in 2010
• Goals: research, education, quality improvement, advocacy & implementation science to minimize the impact of delirium on patients

Source: American Delirium Society [https://www.americandeliriumsociety.org/](https://www.americandeliriumsociety.org/)
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References


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Additional References


