The Power of Music: Supporting People with Dementia in the Emergency Department

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arocedure, used to transfer to

another ward

Background

The emergency department (ED) environment is frequently intense and stressful and people can experience feelings of fear, anxiety, uncertainty, and helplessness. For people living with dementia this can be particularly heightened. Diversion techniques are generally necessary to promote relaxation during this time, although often difficult to implement in the ED setting.

Playlist for Life[©] is an approach of using music of a person's life to keep them connected to themselves and their loved ones throughout their dementia journey. Using personally meaningful music has the ability to improve the life of people with dementia. An individual's playlist is unique and specific to them. This project used the principles of Playlist for Life[©] in a modified way to allow patients with dementia admitted to the ED to experience the therapeutic use of music.

Next steps

Following the success of using music in the ED more iPods have been introduced to facilitate greater use. The same approach has been introduced in theatre recovery and medicine for the elderly wards.

NHS

Fife



family pleased stated made a difference, tapping foot during

Aim

This project tested the use of music for people with dementia in the ED to help reduce stress and distressed behaviours.

Methodology



An MP3 device was loaded with a variety of musical genres and provided to the ED along with headphones and a mini speaker. When patients with dementia were admitted to the ED displaying stress and distressed behaviour the music was offered to alleviate agitation. The patient and/or family carer selected musical genres based on preferences. The patient was supported to listen to the music. The impact of the music was measured using a simple evaluation tool.

Results

Over an 8 week period the music was used with 23 patients. 22 of the 23 patients experienced a positive response to the music. The following were some of the outcomes observed:

- Reduced levels of agitation
- Singing and foot tapping to the music
- Patients more settled and relaxed during clinical procedures
- Family carers felt engaged in care.

Evaluation tool

This tool was used before, during and after the music session to measure the impact of the music on the patient's behaviour and emotional state.

During session (tick all that are observed

Conclusions

The reported benefits of music highlight that it may be a beneficial adjunct to clinical procedures that produce a great deal of anxiety and stress. Current theory suggests that the use of music complements scientific treatment by distracting people's attention away from stressful procedures. This in turn decreases anxiety and improves outcomes. Using music for people with dementia in the ED is a person centred approach to delivering holistic, therapeutic, and effective care. Improving care can be as simple as putting on headphones!

			Time	Mood at start										Mood after	Notes
					eye contact	touch	movement to music	vocalisations	laughter	smiling	sadness	tearfulness	agitation		
ng															