

Porter Valparaiso Hospital Campus Virtually Eliminates VAP Rates

Results

Porter Valparaiso Hospital Campus staff continually searches for ways to improve patient care. The hospital was aware of the importance of oral hygiene to patients in intensive care and had been swabbing patients' mouths and offering mouthwash rinses to its patients for the last 10 years.

In the fall of 2003, clinicians were researching options for eliminating incidence of ventilator-associated pneumonia (VAP) in their hospital. In April 2004, Sage Products' Toothette® Oral Care Suction System was implemented in two intensive care units. Clinicians saw an immediate change, and the hospital experienced zero incidents of VAP between May and August.

In September, the hospital encountered one VAP case, which it considers an outlier and continues to experience zero incidence of VAP. Hospital staff estimates it saved approximately \$360,000 by preventing the costly condition.

"We wanted to eliminate the possibility of VAP and believed that a comprehensive and standardized oral care program would help us to realize our goal, said Terri Gingerich, RN, BSN, CCRN, Critical Care Unit Educator at Porter Valparaiso. We were right!"

On a Mission

Porter Valparaiso Hospital Campus is a member of the Porter Memorial Health System and serves as the acute care hub of the system. Porter Valparaiso is a 300-plus bed facility located in Valparaiso, Ind. The hospital offers a continuum of specialized services and is committed to making a difference in the quality of health and wellness in its community.

Hospital staff was using Sage's Toothette swabs and mouthwash. Unfortunately, oral care efforts were inconsistent and it seemed that each unit and clinician had their own oral care routine.

Gingerich had been reading about oral care as a successful tool for reducing VAP rates and was aware of clinical studies in journals such as the American Journal of Critical Care. In addition, Porter Valparaiso participates in VHA Inc.'s Transformation of the ICU (TICU), a program that helps hospitals improve clinical practice and patient outcomes through small changes to the way they deliver care. When Gingerich was introduced to Sage's Toothette® Complete Oral Care Suction System, she knew it would be key in helping implement a standardized, evidence-based oral care program.

"I shared my research findings and Sage's suction system with senior nurses on our staff, said Gingerich. The clinicians loved the product and the possibility of improving patient outcomes. They became the champions for implementing the system."

Gingerich and her team compiled clinical evidence and shared the information with peers at unit meetings and throughout the hospital. The team made it a point to speak to every clinician in their two ICUs and conveyed the message that oral care is not optional.

"When we showed our peers how a comprehensive oral care program has strong health benefits to patients, they decided it was something they wanted to do", said Gingerich.

Implementing Success

Gingerich quickly found that taking the time to let staff understand and digest the clinical evidence behind oral care paid off. When clinicians understood the data and were shown how to perform oral care measures, they were eager to undertake the task.

Our reasons for standardizing oral care were clinical, said Gingerich. However, the business drivers behind implementing the program helped us to make the case to clinicians, physicians, materials management and administration.

Gingerich demonstrated data that showed that one incidence of VAP can cost the hospital approximately \$40,000. She showed that preventing just one case of VAP would pay for all of the oral care kits the hospital purchased.

With administrative support, the program was implemented. Staff began to perform oral care on all ventilated patients every four hours and to brush each patient's teeth twice a day.

Overall, clinicians did not challenge the new regimen, but only questioned the need to perform oral care at nighttime. Gingerich and her team spent additional time with night shift personnel to educate about oral care consistency and the necessity of performing daytime and night time care.

Gingerich credits the product's ease of use for helping to drive consistent, standardized oral care.

Sage has made it very easy to be compliant, which is what nurses need, said Gingerich. Nurses are busy and they need reminders, visuals and convenience. Sage gives clinicians the tools to give good care.

Gingerich admires Sage's products and commitment to service. She believes Sage is committed to helping efforts work and likes that the company doesn't just dump the products and run. Instead, representatives take the time to make a difference, educate, and make life easier for the staff. She calls the service stellar.

The Sage representative helped conduct many in-service trainings for our staff, right at the nurse's station, said Gingerich. This made it as easy as possible for our clinicians to perform the best care possible. Sage set the precedent. Now any company that comes in to demonstrate their products must do so at the nurse's station.

Porter Valparaiso also used some of Sage's educational posters, which were displayed inside each patient's room to remind staff of the oral care program and procedure.

Situated for Success

Porter Valparaiso fully supports its oral care program and each clinician's efforts to make the program a success. Administration, materials management and physicians are great supporters of the nurses' work and their passion for improving and giving good care.

We have the best recipe for success, said Gingerich. Strong support and trust from administration and staff, and their belief in what we're doing has given us the ability to be successful.

Oral care is a confirmed practice at Porter Valparaiso, a formal oral care protocol has not been established. It is each nurse's passion to provide better care for his/her patients that drives program

consistency, compliance and success.

In 2003, Porter Valparaiso experienced nine VAP cases. Since inception of a comprehensive oral care program in April 2004, the hospital has only experienced one outlier VAP case and maintains zero VAP cases to date.

We have learned that we can really make a difference in our patients' care and that there are many nursing interventions, like oral care, that make a difference in a patient's care plan, said Gingerich. This realization is what is most valuable to us and gives us the power to want to do the best for our patients.

The hospital realizes that performing oral care on patients inadvertently means more work for the clinicians, but when nurses see the difference and benefits of their care on patients, they don't mind the extra work.

We make sure at Porter Valparaiso to give full credit to nursing staff for the success of the program, said Gingerich.

Nurses also are encouraged by the positive effect oral care has on patients and their families. Most family members don't understand all of the work that is being performed to save their loved one's life, but oral care is understood and very noticeable. Seeing that their loved one's mouth is being cleaned shows an extra level of care and reinforces the fact that their family member is in good hands.