

Provena Saint Joseph Steps up Compliance and Zaps Major Hospital-Acquired Infection

Intensive Care nurses at Provena Saint Joseph Medical Center, a Level II Trauma Center, take care of nearly 40 critically ill patients every day, including cardiac, surgical, coronary and medical patients.

Patients in intensive care are oftentimes placed on ventilators to help them recover, but it puts them at risk for developing ventilator-associated pneumonia, or VAP. VAP is a common hospital-acquired bacterial pneumonia that has a mortality rate of 20 to 33 percent and accounts for 60 percent of all deaths due to hospital-associated infections nationwide. A patient study published in CHEST, December 2002, found that the average VAP patient spends an additional 9.6 days on mechanical ventilation, 6.1 extra days in the intensive care unit (ICU) and 11.5 more days in the hospital. This research also showed that treatment of one incidence of VAP can cost a hospital up to \$40,000.

"For years we have conducted a series of clinical interventions to reduce the incidence of VAP," said Gina Schultz, R.N., CIC, infection control practitioner for Provena Saint Joseph Medical Center. "These include elevating the head of the bed, frequently turning patients and watching for swallowing and gagging. It also includes conducting proper oral care."

"Oral care every 4 hours has been hospital policy. Previously, oral care products were wrapped individually as a cost savings measure. Having our tools in separate packages however, proved to be an inconvenience," said Schultz. "We asked Sage Products to repackage all of the tools into one kit to make the process more convenient for nurses on busy floors."

In September 2004, the nurses were trained and began using Sage Products' Q-Care[®] Oral Cleansing and Suctioning System q4[°]. The kit made it easier for nurses to brush, swab and suction patient's mouths at the bedside, because everything they needed was packaged together and at their fingertips.

"We are committed to providing our patients with the highest quality of care," explained Schultz. "Giving the staff time to adapt to the change was key in ensuring that the kits were used properly and patients were receiving the best care possible."

Shirley Ambutas, clinical nurse specialist for critical care, led the effort to reform oral care in order to reduce VAP rates at Provena Saint Joseph Medical Center. Ambutas ensured that the oral care products were stocked in patient rooms and she continually encouraged the staff and reminded nurses of the importance of proper oral care.

"Hospital protocol calls for mouth care to be conducted every two to four hours, knowing that it will be done at least every four," Ambutas said. "It's simply a matter of education and reinforcement of quality standards that proper oral

hygiene can reduce the incidence of VAP, which is a serious but preventable infection."

After educating about proper oral care, it was important to re-educate all staff on charting the care as well. Nurses worked as a team to remind each other about proper charting, which added a little peer pressure in all of the units.

In 2004, Provena Saint Joseph Medical Center reported nine cases of VAP, with a cost estimate of \$360,000. After reintroducing the importance of oral care, the compliance to protocol steadily improved. In the first quarter of 2005, there were no cases of VAP in all four of Provena Saint Joseph Medical Center's ICUs. If this continues, the hospital will have realized a cost avoidance of at least \$320,000.

"Patients are coming to us at one of the most vulnerable times in their lives," said Ambutas. "Providing proper oral care, although a seemingly small task, can make a huge difference for a patient who sees it as a small comfort, something they had at home. It's an opportunity to show patients how dedicated we really are to taking care of them in every aspect of their care. As nurses, it is our mission to provide compassionate care for our patients."

"Adding oral care to our ventilator protocol to help us eliminate ventilator-associated pneumonia is a win for everyone," said Schultz. "It helps us to save lives, avoid hospital costs and longer patient stays, and we reach our ultimate goal-making our patients feel better."

Provena Saint Joseph Medical Center is a leading provider of high-quality, multi-specialty healthcare for the Will and Grundy County communities. The 517-bed facility is the flagship of the Mokena, Illinois-based Provena Health, the Catholic Health System formed by the merger of Franciscan Sisters Healthcare Corporation, ServantCor, and Mercy Center for Health Care Services. Provena Health includes six hospitals, 16 long-term/residential facilities and 28 clinics in Illinois and Indiana.