Implementation of a Referral Criteria for Acute Pain Service Consultation

Lindsey Stanton, FNP/DNP Candidate
University of Maryland School of Nursing

The utilization of Acute Pain Services (APS) in the management of pain in hospitalized patients is a well supported evidence based practice. While many institutions have created APS teams, the utilization of these services is paramount to the success of this evidence-based intervention.

Baseline data for this project was collected by the facility representative who performed an audit on 91 random patients to determine the percentage of patients with uncontrolled pain who had received a consult to APS. Of the patients that met the criteria for referral, only 19.8% had received APS consultation.

To create and implement a referral criteria for acute pain service consultation for nurses to utilize when providing care for hospitalized patients at the facility.

The APS Referral Criteria Tool is pictured below.

The anticipated outcomes of this DNP project were:
1. Increased utilization of the APS
2. Improved standardization in the treatment of uncontrolled pain.

After implementation, the referral rate was 43 out of 70 patients or 61.4%. The total sample size was n=219. This difference was statistically significant using the Chi-Squared test (p < .001).

Discussion
Based on the results, utilization of the APS referral criteria does make a significant impact on the referral rates to APS. It is an easy to use and inexpensive intervention that can bring evidence based services to patients who need them.

Limitations and Unintended Findings:
- Provider resistance to consult APS
- Stakeholder knowledge of evidence base for APS
- Use of the APS tool was not required, thus RN must decide to use the tool

While using the APS referral tool increased the number of referrals to APS, there was still 38.6% of the patients who met criteria and did not receive consultation. Potential reasons for this include:
- Patients were not screened while inpatient
- Consult was not requested
- Provider did not place consult due to oversight or decision not to consult

Conclusions
Based on the results of this project, it can be concluded that using the APS referral criteria does improve utilization of APS in hospitalized patients.

This leads to improved standardization and increased utilization of evidence based solutions for pain management.

References
Please refer to the document for the complete list of references.