CARITAS CONSCIOUSNESS INTENTIONALITY AND CARING HEALING MODALITIES FOR PAIN RELIEF

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Introduction: Managing acute pain related to acute postoperative or traumatic injury presents challenges for both patient and nurse. At times, patients fail to report pain and nurses do not properly assess pain, or look for alternative approaches to pharmacologic modalities for pain relief. The practice environment of a medical-surgical unit specializing in the care of orthopedic and trauma patients is fast-paced, multi-disciplinary, and often a stressful area to work. Registered nurses are frequently frustrated by an inability to effectively manage pain resulting in feelings of inadequacy when focusing on Developing and Sustaining a Helping-Trusting Caring Relationship™ (Watson, 2008) with patients.

Significance: Watson (2008) reminds us that a transpersonal caring relationship is foundational to becoming aware of another’s frame of reference in order “to attend to what is most important for the person behind the patient and the procedure” (p.79). Recognizing the experience and meaning of pain from the patient’s point of view allows the registered nurse to provide pain relief while creating a caring moment between nurses and patient. Moving from pain relief as a task to pain relief as a caring moment requires the nurse to expand Caritas Consciousness beyond the “personal ego” to “open the intelligent heart and hear what is emerging and presenting itself in the now-moment.” (Watson, 2008, p.79). Research has shown that caring-healing modalities provide effective pain relief and improve the patient experience.

Purpose: The purpose of this project is two-fold. First, to provide experiential education to help registered nurses develop Caritas Consciousness and second, to introduce the caring-healing modalities of music, aromatherapy, hand/back massage, relaxation, and breathing as alternative methods of pain relief to the existing pharmacologic pain regimen.

Setting and Participants: The setting is a 32 bed medical-surgical unit within Einstein Medical Center, an acute care hospital in an urban setting. The professional practice model is based on Watson’s Theory of Human Caring and the care delivery model is primary care. Seven registered nurses who have been integrating caring theory into practice were invited to participate in a pilot project using caring-healing modalities as part of patient’s pain relief.

Project Description/Process: Caritas education has been an ongoing process on the unit for the past two years. Although the registered nurses are able to speak to the ten Caritas Processes™ the concept of Caritas Consciousness is not as easy to understand. The Nurse Manager, Clinical Nurse Manager, and the unit Caritas Nurse, began working with the participants to recognize and nurture their individual Caritas Consciousness. The purpose of the education was to have the registered nurses understand how they are the caring-healing environment when they enter the patients’ room. Experiential education related to authentic presence, authentic listening, intentionality, transpersonal caring moments, and centering before entering a patient’s room was
provided. The registered nurses involved in the project were given lanyards with the ten Caritas Processes™ to use as a ritual for centering before entering a patient’s room. Education related to the caring healing modalities is being provided to the participants so they understand the science behind the art of nursing. Once the education is completed the actual project will begin. Patients will be given a decorative card and invited to choose from caring-healing modalities including music, aromatherapy, massage, relaxation, and breathing techniques as an alternative to the traditional pharmacologic modalities. Patients will be assessed for pain relief and pharmacologic pain relief provided if needed.

**Project Outcomes/Projected Outcomes:** The intent is to develop a comprehensive pain relief program incorporating both traditional pharmacologic and non-traditional caring-healing modalities for pain reduction and/or complete pain relief. It is anticipated that as nurses practice Caritas Consciousness integration of the theory into practice will expand and RN engagement will improve and that the introduction of caring healing modalities for pain relief will improve the patient experience as a whole and specifically in terms of pain relief.

**Partial/Projected Evaluation:** Informal feedback from the registered nurses has been positive. The experiential learning activities are helping them understand the concepts of Caritas Consciousness and “being the caring-healing environment” and they are using the lanyards to center. A formal survey for patients will be developed to measure pain relief with the caring healing modalities, and response to pain management will be monitored via patient satisfaction data.

**Future Directions:** To expand the program to other units in the hospital and to have the registered nurses involved in the pilot program certified in holistic nursing.

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**Reference:**