Critical care nurses, being a constant presence in the patient’s journey from illness to recovery, have a pivotal role initiating and coordinating critical care rehabilitation.

Aiming beyond survival: The Critical Care Rehabilitation Pathway

Ana Katrina Evangelista-Lair

Between April 2016 to March 2017, 79.8% of patients admitted in ICU’s across England, Wales and Northern Ireland survived and were discharged into the community. More and more people are surviving critically ill. Evidence suggests, however, that survivors experience significant physical, psychological and cognitive morbidity/impairment due to critical care treatments.

LITERATURE

- Critically ill patients do not always receive rehabilitation as a standard of care. ICU culture and resources are key determinants of early rehabilitation success.
- The use of early and structured rehabilitation programs have been proven effective in improving short term outcomes and long term recovery in critical care patients.
- Prompt assessment and goal setting, as well as continuity of care are important elements of rehabilitation.
- Early mobilization and delirium prevention are two of the important aspects of critical care rehabilitation.

NURSING IMPLICATION

- Assess and identify patients at risk of physical and non physical morbidity.
- Coordinate with the multidisciplinary team, patient and their family in establishment of rehabilitation goals.
- Participate in the implementation of patient rehabilitation, both physical and non physical (e.g. early mobility, patient diaries).
- Provide information and support for patient and families undergoing the pathway.
- Continuous reassessment and evaluation of patient’s progress.
- Ensure complete handover of care during patient’s stepdown to the ward.

A survey of the local nursing staff indicated that 57% have minimal to adequate knowledge of the critical care rehabilitation pathway while 64% believe that resources for the subject are available but with difficulty of access (see pie chart).

This pathway is for adult medical and surgical rehabilitation needs as a result of a period of critical illness.

Short clinical assessment must be done for high risk patients.

Availability of resources for implementation of the pathway

- Easily available
- Available but with difficulty of access
- Non available

References:

BACCN Conference 2019
16 & 17 September Edinburgh