EMORY HEALTHCARE

Therapeutic Thursdays:
Stress Relief for Perioperative Teams

MAGNET RECOGNIZED AMERICAN NURSES CREDENTIALING CENTER

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Aim Statement

Because stress and burnout are serious issues among healthcare employees, stress-relief strategies can help support staff, and ultimately sustain a healthy work environment.

Background

The Covid-19 pandemic created unprecedented levels of stress and burnout amongst healthcare workers. Healthy work environments not only have an impact on staff retention, but can also help reduce burnout, staff turnover, and absenteeism (Nowrouzi, et al, 2015).

Analysis

Following several particularly stressful events, our department created "Therapeutic Thursdays" to create an environment for stress-relief during the workday. The dedicated environment focused on mindfulness and stress-relief strategies.

Actions/Tests of Change

A conference room was dedicated for an entire day every Thursday for staff to utilize during break times for stress-relieving activities. Signs were placed on the door to discourage talking, lights were lowered, and soothing music played over the speaker system. Staff were offered activities such as coloring pages, crossword puzzles, games, and a variety of tea to enjoy. There were fliers provided by our spiritual health department with easy, quick stress-relief strategies, like breathing exercises and gratitude exercises. Participants included staff (nurses, surgical techs, transporters, patient care assistants, anesthesia staff, residents, and physicians) from the Perioperative platform, including the OR, PACU, Pre-op, and Endoscopy.

Our conference room, supplied with puzzles, games, soft music, tea, and stress-relief exercises for staff to utilize throughout the day

Data Collection

- A questionnaire was offered via QR code in the room.
- Before entering the room, 80% of staff reported feeling some level of stress ("Before entering the room, I felt stressed") 10% Strongly Agree, 70% Agree, 10% Neutral, 10% Disagree, 0% Strongly Disagree
- When asked the question on a Likert-style scale "After leaving the room, I felt better than when I entered," responses were overwhelmingly positive, with an 80% response of Strongly Agree, 20% Agree, and 20% Neutral. We received no responses of Disagree or Strongly Disagree
- In response to the question "I am enjoying the Therapeutic Thursday room" 80% of respondents Strongly Agreed, 10% Agreed, and 10% were Neutral. We received 0 Disagree or Strongly Disagree responses.
- The majority of respondents (60%) reported spending 5-30 minutes in the room (40% 5-15min, 20% 15-30min). 20% spent less than 5 minutes, and 20% spent more than 30 minutes in the room.

Results

With the success of our initial Therapeutic Thursday implementation, this became regular practice for our departments, every Thursday. Staff continue to utilize and enjoy the room, and even look forward to participating.

Reflection/Follow-up

Creating a safe space for stress-relief during the workday has an impact on mental health, reducing the risk of burnout

References:
Nowrouzi, B., Lightfoot, N., Larivière, M., Carter, L., Rukholm, E., Schinke, R., and Belanger-Gardner, D. Occupational stress management and burnout interventions in nursing and their implications for healthy work environments: A literature review. *Workplace Health & Safety* (Vol 63, Issue 7) July 2015, Pages 308-315 DOI: 10.1177/2165079915576931