

DISPELLING MYTHS AND INCREASING CONFIDENCE TO PROVIDE DIGNIFIED CARE AFTER DEATH' AT BARKING, HAVERING AND REDBRIDGE UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL'

Category Entered: Turning it Around
Mortuary Manager

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SUMMARY

- Barking, Havering and Redbridge University Hospitals NHS Trust (BHRUT) is a large acute Trust in the South-East of England. We run two hospitals – King George Hospital in Goodmayes and Queen’s Hospital in Romford – and also serve clinics across outer North-East London.
- Working closely with our partner organisations, our 6,500 staff and volunteers care for a diverse community of 750,000 people.
- Care of deceased patients within the Trust was often hit and miss (some good care and some not so good) because no formal education was in place.
- The Anatomical Pathology Technologists (APTs) (mortuary staff) worked in collaboration with the senior nurses in the Cancer and Clinical Support Division to improve the care after death. Mortuary insight visits were set up alongside an eLearning module called ‘Care After Death’, it comprised of top tips from the mortuary staff and best practice from the NHS ‘Improving End Of Life Care programme’ on how to care for the patient and family/carer after death.
- Providing insight visits to the mortuary although controversial have provided first-hand experience of what happens after death and have raised awareness of the care and how important it is to treat patient’s as an individual and with dignity.



BACKGROUND

- The procedure for carrying out “Personal Care After Death” (formerly known as “Last offices”) is carried out by Nurses and Health Care Assistants (HCAs) in the clinical areas before transport to the mortuary.
- When carrying out the mortuary admission procedures the APTs started to identify trends in the care after death, which were unsatisfactory. Pictures were taken to show examples of bad practice and sent to the senior nurses.
- These pictures were so shocking that it led to the implementation of this initiative. The initiative was set up to improve the following for care after death throughout the Trust:-
 - Increase the awareness to provide care after death with a dignified manner.
 - To give clear instructions of how to prepare the deceased patient for their journey to the mortuary and safe storage taking into consideration, health and safety, religious and cultural requirements and any individualised requirements for the deceased or the family/carer.
 - To maintain the patient’s dignity, confidentiality and show respect and kindness to the deceased patient and their family.



DELIVERY

- The lead APT contacted senior nurses to present the issues that had been observed and a task and finish group was identified.
- The idea was piloted as a supported mortuary insight visit with a member of the mortuary staff and senior nurse to the cancer and clinical support division. This was well received and was the impetus to devise and implement a Trust wide educational programme.
- The lead APT devised an eLearning package to act as a pre read to the mortuary insight visit. This was uploaded to the Trust's education database and was made an essential for all ward based nurses and health care assistants working in the Trust.
- Feedback from the local community identified that the shrouds that were being used were too transparent. New shrouds were sourced and authorised to be used within the Trust and this was backed by the Chief Nurse.
- A rota was devised to ensure that there was a member from the mortuary team and a senior nurse to provide the insight visits, in order to ensure that all questions could be answered and that emotional support could be given if needed.
- An evaluation form was devised and uploaded to the education database so that improvements could be measured.



IMPACT & RESULTS

- This initiative was started in June 2018 and there has been a significant improvement of the presentation of the patient after death when received in the mortuary e.g. less leakage of bodily fluids, better positioning of the head, more lines left in place where appropriate, and better identification tags.
- Since June 2018 356 insight visits have been attended and 1276 Staff has completed the eLearning. The visits are generally twice monthly at each hospital site.
- Feedback from ward areas has been that there is a greater awareness of care after death and staff confidence has increased in the preparation of the patient after death.
- Individual feedback:
 - “It has enhanced my knowledge for the deceased”
 - “have learnt how to prepare a deceased patient properly”
 - “Reassured that the mortuary staff treat patients with dignity and respect”
- There has been minimal negative feedback; however there have been anxieties about attending the mortuary and this has been dealt with by senior nurse’s support.



IMPORTANT & UNIQUE WORK

- The Trust works hard at improving the awareness of death and dying and is keen to make all aspects of the patient's journey the best it can be for the both the patient and the family/carer. This work has raised the profile of the mortuary staff within the hospital improving relationships between the different staff and has had interest from other hospital mortuary staff.
- The Complaints/Patient Advice and Liaison Department has visited the mortuary to gain insight into the initiative in order to reassure families/carers of the work that is being carried out. We have also shared the success of this project on Twitter and with the local communities (e.g. funeral directors, local Islamic centres).
- This initiative is unique as when the lead APT did some research into what other Trusts do there were very few Trusts that provided insight visits. The initiative has been received in a very positive manner and staff have fed back that they have learnt a lot about the care after death. Before this initiative started the care given to patients was not always of a good standard due to lack of knowledge and adhoc teaching.
- The overall awareness has greatly improved around the work done in the mortuary and some of the myths and fears have been dispelled. This has led to better communication between ward staff and the mortuary, and when complications have arisen then they are easily rectified.

