

Quality Improvement Project: A Touch of Gentleness in Critical Care - Hand Massages for Critically Ill Patients in ITU

Aim

To implement a structured hand massage program in the ITU that reduces patient-reported stress and anxiety levels, better sleep, promote hand mobility and control of pain

Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically reshaped critical care practices worldwide. In Intensive Treatment Unit (ITU), the pandemic highlighted not only the importance of advanced medical interventions but also the critical need for holistic patient care. There's a growing recognition of the psychological toll on critically ill patients, particularly due to isolation, reduced physical contact, and the stress of critical illness. This project aims to address these challenges by introducing hand massages as a complementary therapy to support critically ill patients This is to address Pain, Comforting Agitation and Delirium, Complimentary therapy to hand immobility and Promoting better sleep hygiene.



Benifits of Hand Massage in ITU Settings

Pain Relief	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Distraction Mechanism• Improves circulation and release of endorphines as natural pain killers
Stress Reduction and Relaxation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stimmulation of parasympathetic Nervous System• Lowers cortisol levels
Help manage delirium confusion, PTSD and overall wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• nonverbal connection and reduce loneliness• Humanizing care• Help in sensory phase for Dementia
Aid to prevent immobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nerve function stimulation• Reduce neuropathy symptoms
Improve Sleep	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Release of Oxytocin• Promote relaxation to aid in sleep

Discussion

- March 2023 - Senior Critical Care Sister Carmen Diaz attended a community based hand Massage training from "A Touch of Gentlenes"
- Recognising the difficulties brought by the COVID Pandemic the project was bourne for ESHT ITU patients
- Training of ten volunteer ITU Nurses to start the program
- Provided a nightly 10 minute offering of Hand Massages for consenting ITU patients.
- Main target population of recovering and long term ITU patients. Risk assessments also carried out for appropriateness
- Able to provide more than 300 hand massages for ITU patients and staff
- Positive feedback from patients - "Felt they are human"
- Able to support managing Pain, Agitation, Delirium, Immobility and Sleep Promotion
- Project is low cost, sustainable and provides positive patient experience

Conclusion

This quality improvement project represents a significant step in adapting our care practices to provide more holistic, touch-based interventions while maintaining the highest standards of safety and infection control. Further studies of key benifits is reccomended to monitor changes to support evidenced based practice.