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Early detection of mental illness in the correctional setting with the use of correctional mental health screening tool for men

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The needs of patients with mental health disorders are being questioned in correctional facilities. According to Mental Health America (2016), between 300,000 and 400,000 people with mental illness are incarcerated in the jails and prisons in the United States. The importance of early detection of mental illnesses is crucial in the correctional setting to decrease mental health crises, for example, suicides and other psychotic episodes. The nursing staff working in the correctional setting need to be educated, trained and introduced to this population. A Mental Health screening tool must be utilized to help identify these inmates early on. This project was conducted to improve the number of mental health referrals by nursing staff in a corrections system of care, over three months period in a jail in California. The medical nurses, who did admissions or intakes, at the correctional facility were selected. The participants were trained to use the Correctional Mental Health Screening tool for Men (CMHS-M) at intake. The correctional mental health tool for men (CMHS-M), is a tool designed for the purpose of early detection of mental illness in the correctional setting. This tool helps assist in the early identification of mental illness so that appropriate interventions are made accordingly. Screening is important because it can distinguish if a patient/inmate is suffering from a mental illness, substance abuse problems, development delays or intellectual difficulties, or other deficits in their cognitive functioning. This tool showed evidence of reliability, validity and predictive utility in relation to the accurate identification of undetected mental illnesses (Gonzales, Schofield, Hagy & US Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs National Institute of Justice (NIJ), 2007). A paired samples t-test was used to gather pre-and post-data results. The overall results helped increase the mental health patient referrals by nursing staff through early detection of mental illnesses. The aim of this project was to utilize the CMHS-M tool with an adult male population in the correctional setting to determine whether this tool should be used as a screening instrument for the identification of mental health problems on a permanent basis. This project showed that the CMHS-M tool does screen for mental illness among male inmates resulting in increased referrals for mental health care. It is a guide for medical nurses to refer patients to the providers, which leads to early treatment and prevention of mental illness.

Biography

Grashika Devendra was born in the beautiful island of Fiji where she finished primary school. She moved to the United States and further finished high school and graduated with Associate Degree Nursing from Modesto, California and got her Bachelor's Degree from California State University, Stanislaus. She graduated from nursing school and got licensed and started her career in Psych Nursing. At first, she was scared and unsure of my career in Psych Nursing, but as the days went by, she became sure and her path became clearer. She gained her experience at inpatient and outpatient psychiatric facilities and then went into Correctional Psych Nursing. She wanted to further her career in the psychiatric field and gaining her Doctor of Nursing Practice, Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner was the best option and career for her. Innovation in Psychiatry is her goal and passion.

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