

Introduction

Long Term Care Facilities (LTC) often lack standard clinical equipment and supplies leading to interruptions or incomplete care. Based on a survey of geriatric clinicians, we previously compiled a portable toolkit containing medical equipment for clinical use in the LTC facility. The equipment is carried in a hard cover rolling briefcase.

In this study, three nurse practitioners caring for patients in the LTC facility were observed with and without this toolkit. The aim of the study is to evaluate clinician care using the toolkit.

Methods

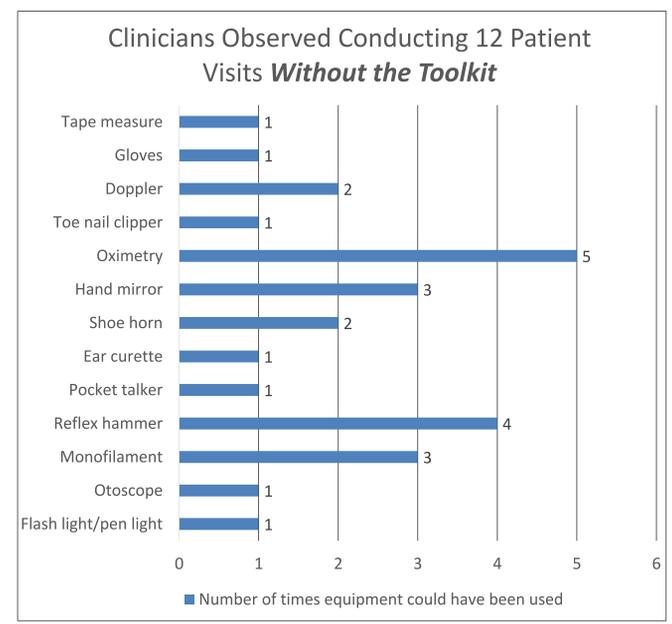
- Three nurse practitioners were observed providing care in LTC.
- Clinical care of 37 patients over 9 half day sessions in assisted living, transitional care and long term care settings.
- Each participant was observed for one half day without the toolkit.
- Clinicians were provided with the toolkit and instructions two months prior to starting observations sessions, then observed for two half days with toolkit.



Results without Toolkit

Baseline observation: Three clinicians were observed conducting 12 patient visits without the toolkit.

- There were 26 clinical situations where the toolkit could have been useful.
- The care of patient with pressure ulcer of buttocks and heels could have been enhanced if a mirror, monofilament and tape measure were available.



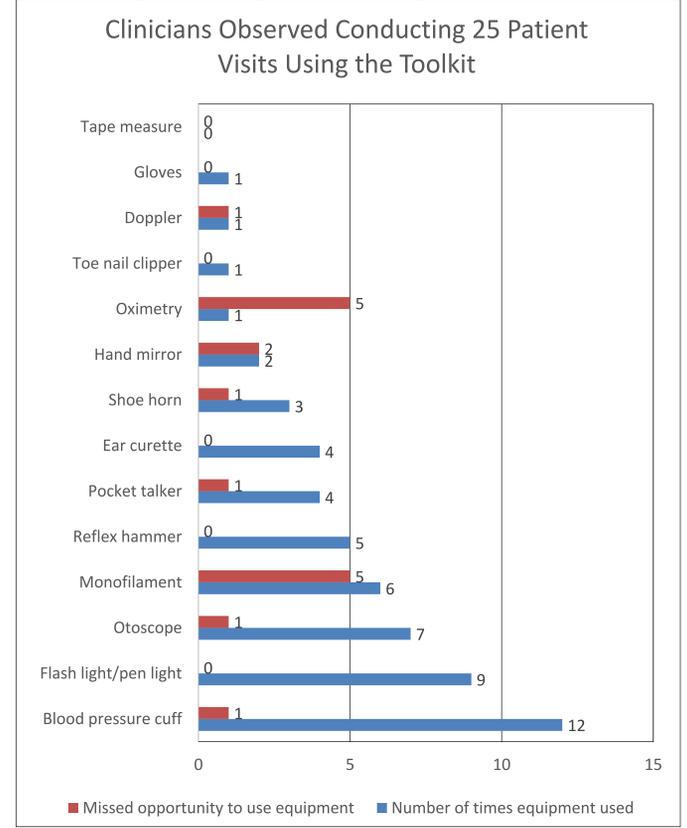
Toolkit



Results with Toolkit

Post-intervention: Three clinicians were observed conducting 25 patient visits with the toolkit.

- The clinicians were observed using equipment in 56 clinical situations.
- In 17 clinical situations the equipment could have been beneficial but was not used.
- Availability of toolkit and easy access to otoscope, ear curette and pocket talker improved communication and care for a patient with hearing loss.
- The clinician used the nail clipper to trim painful thick toe nail, and thus prevented outpatient visit.



General Observations

- Valuable clinical time is often used to locate and take back patients to their rooms for clinical exam.
- Clinicians often stored the toolkit in a central office because they preferred not to pull the briefcase around the facility when not sure of patients' location.
- The procedure supplies were not used. The clinicians reported inadequate training in procedures, such as skin biopsy, suturing, and joint injections.

Clinicians' Recommendations

- Add wound care supplies.
- Add a thermometer and portable scale to be used in Assisted Living Facilities.
- Create a smaller, lighter bag with frequently used equipment in the larger toolkit. A smaller kit is more convenient in some clinical situations.
- The procedure supplies were not used. The clinicians reported inadequate training in procedures such as biopsies, suturing and joint injections.

Conclusions

- Clinicians were able to perform a more thorough assessment and more timely care when the toolkit was available.
- The availability of the toolkit minimized time spent in searching for equipment. Often the equipment that is needed is not available or not functioning properly.
- Using the toolkit will enhance the efficiency and quality of patient care in the long term care facilities.
- Significant valuable clinician time was spent in searching for patients when they are not in their rooms. A more efficient system for organizing patient care in the LTC is needed.
- Low utilization of the kit in this study suggest that additional strategies are needed to expand the use of the toolkit. Strategies for reminding clinician to increase use would be valuable.

References

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