Implementing the Condensed Memorial Symptom Assessment Scale on an Inpatient Oncology Unit

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Background

Symptom distress places a burden on patients and their families, but it is often not captured in nursing documentation. Using a symptom management tool, such as the Condensed Memorial Symptom Assessment Scale (CMSAS), can assist in this capture and link patients to resources.

Objectives: The purpose of this quality improvement (QI) project was to implement the CMSAS and capture symptom burden to create a streamlined method of documentation.

Methods: A QI pilot was conducted on an inpatient oncology unit implementing the CMSAS. Then, surveys were provided to the patients to complete at admission and discharge. The most distressing symptoms patients reported were added into the electronic health record nursing care plan that automatically uploaded interventions based on ONS Guidelines™.

Findings: Patient (N = 73) symptom distress was quickly tracked, and there were no statistically significant changes in patient distress from admission to discharge, except for two symptoms: drowsiness and sadness. From admission to discharge, drowsiness decreased and sadness increased. In addition, more than half of the patients reported experiencing pain, worry, and nervousness.

Keywords

Symptom assessment; nursing care; health surveys; patient-centered care

Digital Object Identifier

10.1188/22.CJON.E1-E6