Shared learning

Theme of the week

Avoiding Escalation of Behaviours

Date

30/12/2024

Background and context

A patient with a history of challenging behaviours, particularly physical and verbal aggression, has been admitted to the ward. Given the risk associated with such behaviours, a 1:1 staffing ratio has been implemented, meaning the patient will have a dedicated staff member continuously monitoring and supporting them. This level of supervision is critical for maintaining the safety of both the patient and others in the environment.

What happened?

This highly agitated patient exhibited aggressive behaviours, including slamming, banging, and kicking doors. He was pacing the ward and pressed a green alarm, proceeding downstairs to another ward, setting off their door alarm. The patient activated the fire alarms and attempted to exit through a fire door, but staff successfully redirected him. His agitation continued, and he was able to force open a door without triggering an alarm, though at other times the alarm did activate. He broke doors and, after getting through, climbed up and down stairs, nearly falling. The patient remained unpredictable and a significant safety risk.

What should have happened?

Given the severity of the situation, there are several actions that should have been taken to ensure the safety of both the patient and the ward:

-Immediate Alarm and Security Response
-Review of Alarm Systems
-Review of enhanced supervision
-Environmental Modifications
-De-escalation techniques
-Use of Restraints as needed
-Continuous risk assessment
-Correct Staff skill mix

These responses would ensure a more controlled approach to the patient's behaviour, reducing risks of harm to himself, others, and property.

What we will do differently next time

To improve safety and management, the following actions should be taken differently next time:Staff should follow each patient ' s behaviour guidelines and ensure that proactive strategies are given as much importance as the reactive ones. There could always be a trigger to every behaviour and staff working in behaviour units should be able to identify these signs even before patients escalate. Proper training is also essential in ensuring that control measures and risk assessments are carried out efficiently. Due to this incident, a Rapid Response Team was created in the unit to ensure that incidents like these are managed well in the future.

What have we learned?

We learned that safety systems, like alarms, must be regularly maintained to ensure reliability. Early intervention and proactive de-escalation are crucial to prevent aggressive behaviors from escalating. Unpredictable patients may require enhanced supervision and environmental modifications, such as securing stairwells and exits. Effective communication, team training, and preparedness for physical interventions, if needed, are essential to manage challenging behaviors and ensure patient and staff safety.

☑ I have read this

Name	Job role	Signature