Epilepsy Education for Nurses

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Most research and reporting are from places outside the U.S.

Findings:
- gaps in knowledge regarding epilepsy in nursing students.
- a link between education and confidence in epilepsy management.
- much of nursing management takes place in settings where chronically ill patients reside or attend and where nurses tend to have the least training.
The Nurses Role

- Nurses are involved in multiple disciplines
- Nurse faculty recognize the overlap between medicine and nursing
- The nurses overall role is to help patients achieve their highest level of wellness despite their medical diagnosis.
Levels of Nursing Training

- **Pre-licensure**
  - ASN training
  - Diploma
  - BSN

- **Advanced-practice training**
  - Nurse Practitioners
  - Clinical Nurse Specialists
  - Nurse Educators
  - Nurse Administrators

- **Doctoral preparation**
  - DNP
  - PhD
Pre Licensure

- Trained as generalist
- Four levels of training can sit for boards
  - Associate of Arts, Diploma, Bachelors, Masters (CNL).
- Most epilepsy education takes place in
  - Medical Surgical classes
  - Neurological and psychiatric classes
  - Pharmacology classes
  - Pediatrics classes
Pre-licensure Education

- General description of seizure types.
- What to do in an emergency situation – “Status Epilepticus”
- Education about anti epilepsy medication
- Simulation – managing a person with a GTC.
Advanced Practice

- Nurse Practitioners (NP)
- Clinical Nurse Specialists (CNS)
- Nurse Educators
- Nurse Administrators
Certifications

- American Association of Neuroscience Nursing – general neurology certification with small emphasis on epilepsy – not an APN certification.
- NP and CNS certification – Pediatrics, Adult, Geriatrics, Acute care, Critical Care, Family, Women’s Health, etc.
- Certifications typically populations instead of diseases.
Doctoral Training

- Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) – tends to be systems and clinically focused.
- PhD – terminal degree and like any other PhD – focuses on research.
- There are only a few PhD prepared nurses who focus on epilepsy.
School Nurses

- Due to budget cuts, there are fewer school nurses available.
- Often the first to recognize seizures in children and in some states can give Diastat.
- The Epilepsy Foundation and the School Nurses Association have developed an education program for school nurses.
- School Nurses are especially important in settings where children with epilepsy who also have intellectual disabilities.
Training Available for Nurses

- **Training from Specialty Organizations.**
  - AANN has two products.
    - The Guide to the Care of the Patient with Seizures
    - The Core Curriculum.
  - The American Epilepsy Society (AES) has developed several interdisciplinary programs and programs from annual meetings are available on-line.
    - Teleconsults
    - Resident and Nursing education.
Others

- The organization “Child Neurology Nurses”
- Epilepsy.com which includes a professional training component.
- The Epilepsy Foundation (EF).
What’s Missing

- Educating nurses in self-management theory and chronic illness management is rare.
- Much of the typical training addresses a medical model.
- At the generalist level, recognition of seizures is critical – but without first-hand experience, recognition is difficult.
Recommendations

- Discussion and decisions regarding necessary baseline information for generalist nurses.
- Education in self-management theory and chronic disease management education is critical.
- Certification for epilepsy management for both nurses and APNs.
- Support and encourage nurses to be educated at the doctoral level and focus on epilepsy research.


