



Improving services for patients with Disorders of Consciousness (DoC): Implementation of family and staff education packages in a Neurosciences Unit

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INTRODUCTION

Disorders of consciousness (DoC) are characterised by impairments in wakefulness and awareness and occur after severe acquired brain injury (ABI). To optimise outcomes post-ABI, a specialised, multidisciplinary team (MDT) approach is imperative, including family education. Anecdotal evidence suggests that families possess limited understanding of DoC and available interventions. Equally, MDT staff have reduced confidence/skills in delivering treatment to patients with DoC and education to their families.

Aim: To evaluate the effectiveness of a family and staff education package in enhancing knowledge, confidence and skills of staff and families surrounding DoC and sensory stimulation.

METHODS

Design

Pre-post intervention measuring family member and staff perceptions of a “Family Education Package” and “Staff Education Package” through pre and post surveys.

Participants

Two groups of participants were recruited: *Health service participants* and *consumer participants* from the Neurosciences Unit at the PAH. Eligible health professionals were from Nursing and Allied Health (AH) professions with any experience level providing health services to patients with DoC and their families. Consumer participants were family members (FM) of patients admitted to the Neurosciences unit with DoC.

Analysis

Non-parametric statistics (Median, IQR, Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test) were utilised to analyse the data collected from the pre and post implementation surveys. Data analysis was conducted comparing medians from staff and family pre and post surveys.

Procedure

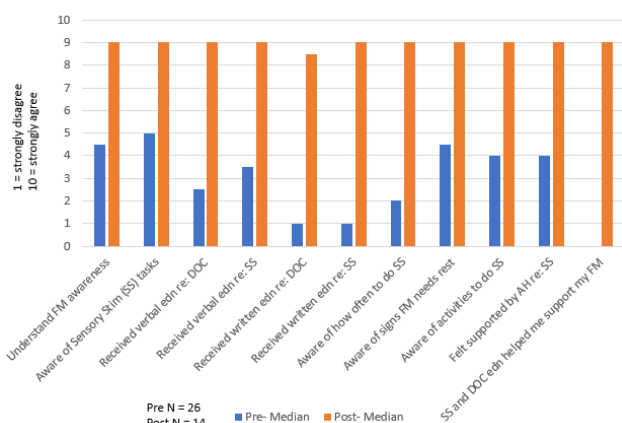
Family education package: included; a sensory preference questionnaire, a sensory stimulation (SS) plan and a DoC management plan. These education resources were delivered to all families of patients with DoC on the Neurosciences unit by the AH team.

Staff education package: included; attendance at an in-service outlining DoC, SS and the family education package using a standardised presentation (developed independently by the researchers) and MDT management guidelines (adapted from the Alfred Health ABI Rehab Centre package). The researchers delivered the staff education via in-services to the MDT on the Neurosciences unit.

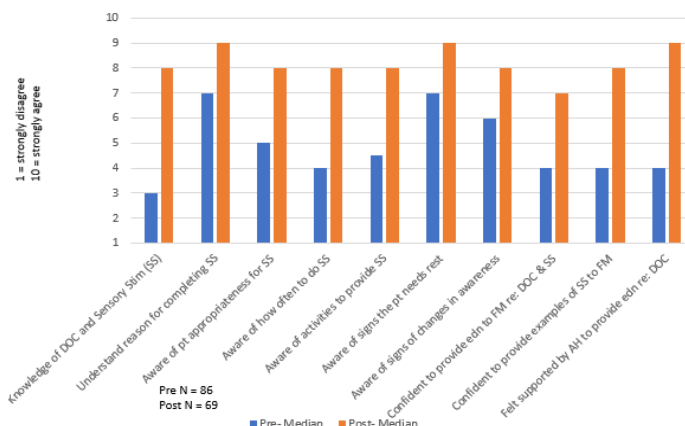
RESULTS

Participants: Between June 2018 – October 2020, 26 consumer participants (FM: parents n= 10, spouse n= 10, siblings = 4 children n= 2) and 86 health service participants (professions: nurses n= 56, PT/SP/OT n= 30) were recruited. Due to difficulties with follow up, only 14 consumer participants and 69 health service participants completed post-education surveys.

FAMILY PRE & POST EDUCATION SURVEYS



STAFF PRE & POST EDUCATION SURVEYS



There was a statistically significant improvement across all areas of knowledge, confidence, and skill for both family and staff post implementation of the education packages (all p-values = p < .001).