Solving the Delirium puzzle

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Abstract
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Solving the Delirium Puzzle

By Amy Montgomery, Victoria Traynor, Hui Chen (Rita) Chang and Peter Smerdely

Delirium is a highly prevalent medical condition, with up to 50% of older hospitalised patients developing the condition. Despite the high morbidity and mortality of delirium, it is often under recognised. Through our years in aged care, we have witnessed the gap between evidence-based research and delirium care. This gap is often due to a lack of knowledge, negative attitudes and a misconception that confusion is a normal part of ageing.

Finally, with the release of the Comprehensive Care Standard by the National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) (2019), delirium is getting much needed attention. This new standard now mandates delirium screening for all at risk patients and the development of individualised care plans. These mandated requirements will require addressing the existing knowledge gap on delirium assessment and management.

However, due to the complexity of delirium, it requires more than just a one-hour face to face session, which is the main form of teaching in the hospital setting.

Our aim was to develop an education program that was feasible to be delivered to nursing staff during their normal inservice time.

The education program that has been designed is an innovative multi-modal delirium education program. The innovative part of the program being hands-on simulation using objective structured clinical examinations (OSCEs).

OSCEs are becoming common place in the undergraduate setting but are rarely used in postgraduate level nursing. Simulation, such as OSCEs, provide a safe environment to reinforcement of learning and to relate theory to practice.

The education program consists of the following:

- face to face sessions with a booklet resource,
- online learning activities,
- OSCE and
- reflection exercise.

The four components require a total of two hours and can be broken up into individual sessions. The OSCE scenarios can be developed and adapted to any clinical speciality.

We have conducted this education program across aged care wards at three different hospitals. With the results highlighting an increase in participants self-perceived confidence and competence in their knowledge and assessment skills of delirium. And we have demonstrated that the knowledge gained is translated into clinical practice. The project and data collection has expanded to non-aged care wards.

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