

NURSING INTERVENTIONS AND AUTISM

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THE CHALLENGES OF AUTISM

- No definitive cause
- Many treatments and interventions but many not scientifically validated
- No definitive cure yet parents hear that others have been "cured"
- Impact on the quality of life for the entire family including parents, siblings, and relatives and friends
- Parents need to control the disruptive effect

THE CHALLENGES OF AUTISM

- Difficulty accepting the diagnosis and what it means since issues and skills may be constantly changing
- Parents must learn about and implement the myriad of services as they oversee the life long needs for special education and health care
- May be a severe financial burden
- May have difficulty accessing health care providers

RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE NURSE

- Support families and caregivers to match developmental and medical needs of the child or adult with treatment options and available resources
- INFORMATION AND REFERRAL
 - Diagnosis and referral, not diagnosis and dump
- Promote quality care for your clients with autism by advocating in acute care, and other medical or non medical settings
- Implement basic nursing interventions to decrease anxiety and pain with your client and their family and optimize the quality of care

TOP TEN QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ASKED ABOUT ASD

- **MANY QUESTIONS, not enough definitive answers**
 - #1 Vaccinations?
 - Should I vaccinate my baby/child?
 - When should I vaccinate my child?
 - If vaccines can possibly cause autism in some children, what should I do about vaccination?

TOP TEN QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ASKED ABOUT ASD

- #2 What are the signs of autism?
- #3 What schools should I send my child to and where can I get IEP help?
- #4 Do special diets help?
- #5 How do I talk to a relative about my concerns that their child may be exhibiting signs of autism?

QUESTIONS TO ASK REGARDING SPECIFIC TREATMENT

- What is the treatment program's rationale and purpose?
- Is there written information?
- What is involved for the child and family?
- What is length of treatment, frequency of session, time and costs to the family?
- Does the treatment focus on one skill or is it a comprehensive program?

QUESTIONS TO ASK REGARDING SPECIFIC TREATMENT

- Will the treatment result in harm to the child?
- Is the treatment developmentally appropriate?
- What is the background and training experience of the staff?
- Does the treatment staff allow input from the family?
- Are assessment procedures specified and is program individualized for each child?

QUESTIONS TO ASK REGARDING SPECIFIC TREATMENT

- How will progress be measured?
- How often will effectiveness of the intervention be evaluated?
- Who will conduct the evaluation?
- What criteria will be used to determine if treatment should be continued or abandoned?
- What scientific evidence supports the effectiveness of the program?

QUESTIONS TO ASK REGARDING SPECIFIC TREATMENT

- How will failure of treatment affect the child and family?
- How will treatment be integrated into the child's current program?
- Do not become so infatuated with a given treatment that functional curriculum, vocational, life and social skills are ignored

Information provided courtesy of: B.J. Freeman, Ph.D.
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NURSING STRATEGIES FOR COMMON MEDICAL SITUATIONS

- The Health Care Visit
 - More stressful for people with ASD because of difficulties with new environments and changes in their normal routine
 - If possible, a preliminary assessment of the child or adult over the phone with the caregiver or parent prior to the visit can be most helpful.
 - Discuss the client's limitations and strengths in terms of communication, sensory issues, social needs and behavioral issues

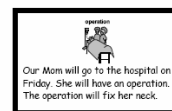
NURSING STRATEGIES FOR COMMON MEDICAL SITUATIONS

- Find out strategies commonly used to improve communication e.g. PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System)
- Discuss successful strategies previously utilized to achieve behavioral compliance e.g. effective distraction techniques and positive token or reward system
- Minimize the wait time in the waiting room
- Consider having the parent or caregiver write and review with the client a Carol Gray social story before the visit

MEDICAL SOCIAL STORIES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH AUTISM

- Provide people with ASD with accurate information about what they might encounter
- Relieve anxiety by providing information
- Can use pictures and writing for social story
- Can use pictures only for those who do not read
- How to write a social story - go to www.thegraycenter.org

EXAMPLE OF STORY



EXAMPLE OF STORY

Getting My QEEG

I think it will be fun!



First I will sit on the chair.
Or I can sit on
mommy's lap if I want to.

THE BLOOD TEST

- Use a social story to familiarize the child with the procedure
- Minimize the wait in the lab waiting room
- Decrease the pain of the needle by advising parents to apply topical anesthetic cream that will numb the area an hour and one half prior to the blood test
 - Ela-Max is available in pharmacies

TAKING MEDICINE OR VITAMIN SUPPLEMENTS

- May have oral and tactile sensitivity which makes it difficult to swallow pills
- Oralflo Pill Swallowing cup helps medicine go down for children with autism and many other conditions without gagging or discomfort www.oralflo.com
- Crush pills and disguise in food

THE AMBULANCE AND THE EMERGENCY ROOM

- Individuals may have sensory issues, hypersensitivity to sirens, can not tolerate bandages, blood pressure cuffs
- If possible turn off siren and decrease lighting immediately
- Advocate for your patient in the ER before they take over the ER
- Minimize wait and triage quickly

THE AMBULANCE AND THE EMERGENCY ROOM

- If possible find a quieter area in the ER to avoid meltdowns and provide a calmer atmosphere for your patient
- Provide information as soon as possible to ER staff about the patient's verbal skills, sensory issues, behavioral issues
- Resource: Caring for Children and Adolescents with Autism Who Require Challenging Procedures. Pediatric Nursing, M. Souders et al., 2/13/2003

USEFUL WEBSITES FOR NURSES

- Caring for Children with ASD: A resource toolkit for clinicians
- www.aap.org/pub39227
- www.autismspeaks.org/community/fsdb/search.php
 - You may also call the Autism Response Team at 888-Autism
- www.autismsource.org

USEFUL WEBSITES FOR NURSES

- Autism and oral surgery:
 - www.lucasworks.org/autism-oral-surgery.html
- Safety issues:
 - www.unlockingautism.org/safetykit.asp
 - www.mypreciouskid.com/Child-autism-safety
- Nutrition, special diets and autism: Learning module offering CEU's
 - www.nutritioncare.net

USEFUL WEBSITES FOR NURSES

- Nursing and autism: CEU's offered on line
 - <http://rn.modernmedicine.com/rnweb/CE+Library/Understanding-the-world-of-children-with-Autism/ArticleStandard/Article/detail/493584?searchString=autism>

FAMILY ISSUES RELEVANT TO AUTISM

- 60-80% of families with autism get divorced
- Siblings are impacted
- Grandparents and other relatives are impacted
- Refer to local support groups, sibling support groups, individual therapy

FAMILY ISSUES RELEVANT TO AUTISM

- Through the IEP process, mental health therapy for both the client and family may be covered
- Utilize handouts and films to increase awareness with other health professionals and the community
- The Third Parent - 6 minute documentary on sibling issues

NURSING INTERVENTIONS

ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES