

Developing Visitor Guidelines for the ICU

The Problem

A lack of clear guidelines around the open visitation policy in the intensive care units (ICU) led to frustration for both visitors and staff. There were expectations and limitations, but not consistent ones even among staff. In turn, these were not communicated clearly to visitors, leading one family member to exclaim, "Just tell me what the rules are!"

Aim/Goal

To develop talking points for staff and guidelines for visitors to the ICU that explain both what the expectations are and why.

The Team

Jean Campbell, RN, MS, SICU
Suzanne Joyner, RN, BSN, SICU
Luci Lima, RN, MSN, TSICU
Kristin O'Reilly, RN, MPH, Critical Care Quality
Barbara Sarnoff-Lee, LICSW, Social Work
Pat Sorge, RN, AS SICU
BIDMC ICU Patient-Family Advisory Council (PFAC)

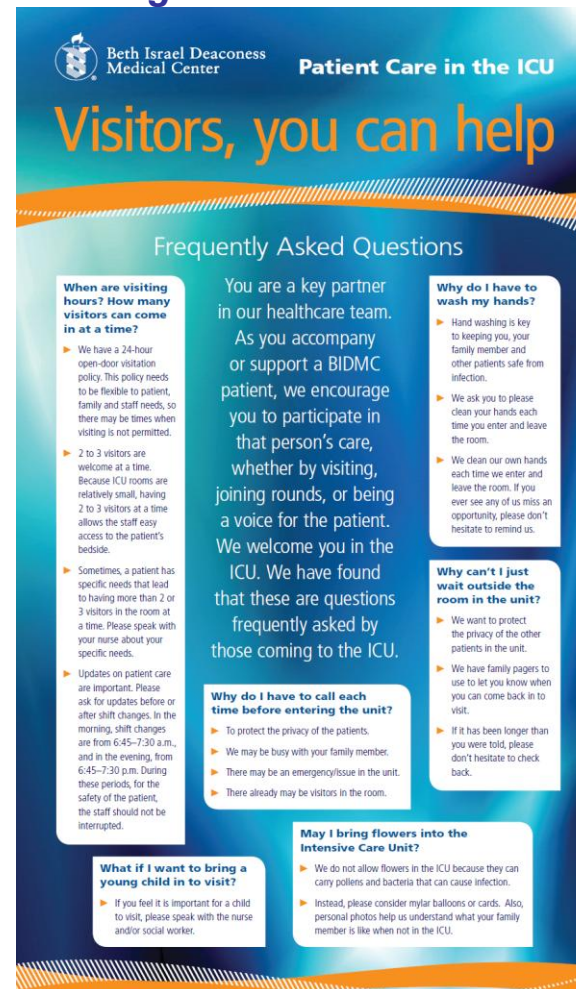
The Interventions

- Identified issues and concerns via fishbone diagrams in all ICUs
- Standardized guidelines with only essential limitations
- Developed talking points to explain the guidelines
- Solicited feedback on poster design, content and format from ICU Patient-Family Advisory Council (PFAC) and families of current patients
- Created posters for waiting rooms and each patient room

Lessons Learned

- Families need and want to understand visitation guidelines: why, not just what. Talking points help create a standard message.
- Engage patients and their families early in the process and be prepared for sometimes conflicting feedback!
- Periodically re-test assumptions as needs of family and staff change over time.

The Results/Progress to Date



Next Steps/What Should Happen Next

- Use as framework for hospital-wide visitor guidelines
- Integrate into ICU Visitor pamphlet
- Reinforce clear communication upon admission



Beth Israel Deaconess
Medical Center



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Harvard Medical School

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For more information, contact:
Jean M Campbell, RN, MS Nurse Manager SICU/TSICU
jmcampbe@bidmc.harvard.edu