

# 46<sup>TH</sup> GLOBAL NURSING & HEALTHCARE

October 15-16, 2018 | Las Vegas, USA

## **Harm reduction and optimum outcomes for patients experiencing withdrawal (HOPE): A pilot project in acute care nursing**

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**Statement of the Problem:** Patients who are in the acute care hospital setting and are experiencing withdrawal from alcohol or other substances require complex and specialized nursing care. Despite this need, these patients are commonly placed in the general medical/surgical population creating a care burden for nurses who are undereducated on the management of withdrawal. This, in turn, results in poor outcomes such as low staff satisfaction, mismanagement of withdrawal, and potential patient and staff harm. The purpose of this pilot unit was to cohort patients who are admitted for acute care diagnoses to a community hospital and are experiencing withdrawal in one location. Using the Department of Health recommendations on the management of patients in withdrawal, a unit comprised of behavioral health specialists, RNs, and certified nursing assistants were developed. In addition, connections with community resources were formalized. Each team member selected for this unit expressed a desire to work with this patient population. All were then trained on addiction disease, medication management, and trauma-informed care.

**Early findings:** Staff has expressed that they feel equipped to manage patient symptoms and behaviors. Patients are now offered recovery options upon discharge and were connected with peer counselors when able to engage. After two months, there have been no patient falls and no staff injuries. In addition, over 20 patients have entered structured recovery programs and 10 have connected with a formal community-based peer organization.

**Conclusion:** Patients who are experiencing withdrawal from the acute care hospital setting are resource intensive and can lead to staff frustration and poor outcomes. This pilot project has demonstrated that creating a specialty trained staff with behavioral health resources can lead to decreased injury to staff and patients and increased opportunity for addiction recovery.

### **Biography**

Deborah Fleming has her Masters in Nursing and has practiced for over 30 years. She has served in various leadership roles for over 20 years and currently manages the HOPE unit in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

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