Telephone Triage

Outcomes

Larry Hoban, RN, White Earth Service Unit
LT Deanna Pepper, White Earth Service Unit
Objectives

- Define Role of Telephone Triage Nurse
- Establish Telephone Triage Protocols
- Identify How Telephone Triage Affects Patient Outcomes
Definition of Telephone Triage

• safe, effective, and appropriate disposition
• assessment, patient education, and crisis intervention.
• new subspecialty, controversial – is it telephone advice, telepractice or telehealth?
• interaction between patient and nurse that takes place via phone.

Reference:
http://www.nursingceu.com/courses/290/index_nceu.html
Retrieved 05/31/2011
WESU Telephone Triage Nurse

- Facilitate access to care
- Provide consultation and assistance to patients and their families
- Crucial to the delivery of safe and effective health care
White Earth Service Unit

• Located on White Earth Reservation in Northern MN
• Primary care and same day clinic
• Two field clinics (NTW and Pine Point)
• User population is 13,093
• Reservation population is 9,562 (2011 census report)
White Earth Service Unit (WESU)

- Variety of services
- New facility in 1998
- Same day clinic opened 06/2000
- Many changes in process since Same Day clinic opened
- Triage nurse position began in 2000
Triage at WESU

- Dedicated Triage nurse
- Utilizes nursing judgment as well as triage protocols
- Same day appts, future appts, home measures
- Collaborative effort with entire clinic staff, outside entities
- Orders labs and x-rays with standing orders
- Policy for triage pending
# Nurse Triage Standing Orders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LAB</th>
<th>CIRCUMSTANCE ORDERED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HCG</td>
<td>For late menses, prior to starting contraception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urinalysis</td>
<td>For dysuria, frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urine C&amp;S</td>
<td>+ nitrites and blood in UA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STD screen</td>
<td>For pt concern, STD symptoms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rapid strep test</td>
<td>For sore throat w/fever, exudate or pt concern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blood sugar</td>
<td>For hypo/hyperglycemia symptoms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardiac panel</td>
<td>For acute chest pain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wet prep</td>
<td>For vaginal discharge, itching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serum HCG</td>
<td>Pregnant pts with vaginal bleeding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSH</td>
<td>Hx or sx of hypo/hyperthyroidism, or med refills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBC</td>
<td>S/sx of infection/anemia/RLQ abdominal pain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X-ray of extremity</td>
<td>Obvious deformity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How telephone triage affects patient outcomes

- TTN can assess a patient over the phone who may be reluctant to come in to the clinic.
- TTN can give that caller home care advice or instruct the patient on the rationale for a clinic appointment or an UC visit.
- TTN can potentially reduce deteriorations of the patient’s condition.
How telephone triage affects patient outcomes

- Added benefits:
  - TTN has access to pt’s EHR record while speaking to the pt.
  - Can advise pt of any upcoming or overdue preventive care, such as immunizations or women’s health appts.
Triage nurses in IHS:

- Facilitates access to care
- Provide consultation and assistance to patients and their families
- Triage via phone, walk in
- Collaborate with family members, CHR, home health nurses, etc.
- Some with certification from NCC
Focus of Telephone Triage

• Focus is assessment and disposition
• Data collection Telephone triage aids in getting the patient to the right level of care with the right provider in the right place at the right time (AAACN, 2007).

Benefits of Triage

Who Performs Telephone Triage?

- RN
  - Clinical experience
  - Triage experience preferred (walk-in or telephone)
- Current BLS certification
- High levels of experience or expertise in:
  - Crisis intervention
  - Teaching/coaching
  - Diagnostic/monitoring
- Good judgment and critical-thinking skills
Telenurse Functions

- The helping function
- The diagnostic function
- The crisis-intervention function
- The monitoring function
Teletriage and the Nursing Process

- Modified version of standard nursing process
  - assessment,
  - diagnosis
  - planning and intervention
  - evaluation
Establish Telephone Triage Protocols

- Are protocols decision-making or decision-support tools?
- Critical thinking skills

Resources for protocols:
- Adults: Telephone triage Protocols for Nurses by Julie Briggs; Telephone Triage Protocols by Sheila Wheeler, Telephone Triage Decision Support Tools doe Nurses by Dale Woodke
- Peds: Pediatric Telephone Advice by Barton D. Schmitt, MD
Four-Tier Triage

- Emergent-level calls.
- Urgent-level calls.
- Acute-level calls.
- Nonacute-level calls.
When In Doubt

- always err on the side of caution"
- Upgrade, never downgrade.
RESOURCES

- American Academy of Ambulatory Care Nursing (AAACN)
  http://www.aaacn.org
- Emergency Nurses Association
  http://www.ena.org
- Teletriage Systems (Author Sheila Wheeler's website)
  http://www.teletriage.com
Questions?

Thank you for attending this presentation. We appreciate your time and attendance. Have a wonderful day.