Subject: Suicide Precautions

Purpose: To provide a safe, uniform, and therapeutic environment for suicidal or potentially suicidal patients.

NOTE: MMSC is a medical facility and does not have an inpatient psychiatric unit. MMSC admits suicidal patients for medical stabilization and not for psychiatric care.

Policy: Any patient admitted to MMSC who presents with an attempted suicide, attempt of self harm, or who verbalizes suicidal or self harm ideation will be placed on suicide precautions. The admitting physician must order Suicide precautions.

Additional Information:

1. Suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death for ages 10-24 years, 2nd leading cause for ages 25-34, 4th leading cause for ages 35-44 and 5th leading cause for ages 45-54.
2. Males are four times more likely to die from suicide, however females report attempting suicide during their lifetime about three times as often as men.
3. The first step in preventing suicide is to understand and identify risk factors. Research has identified the following risk factors for suicide:
   a. Previous suicide attempt(s)
   b. History of mental disorder, particularly depression
   c. History of alcohol and substance abuse
   d. Family history of suicide
   e. Family history of child maltreatment
   f. Feelings of hopelessness or isolation
   g. Impulsive or aggressive tendencies
   h. Barriers to accessing mental health treatment
   i. Loss involving relationship, work, finances or social life
   j. Physical illness
   k. Easy access to lethal methods
   l. Unwillingness to seek help because of the stigma attached to mental health or substance abuse problems
   m. Cultural and Religious beliefs—for instance, the belief that suicide is a noble resolution for a personal dilemma.

Procedure:

A. Environment:
   1. The patient must be admitted to ICU and placed in a room near the nurse’s station.
2. The physician or RN may allow or restrict visitors to whatever degree deemed appropriate, depending on patient condition and the patient’s wishes.
3. Phone privileges will be determined by staff, depending on patient condition.
4. Any potentially dangerous object will be removed from the patient’s room including their belongings.
5. The patient will be dressed in hospital attire.
6. All personal belongings will be collected and placed outside of the patient’s room. These belongings will be labeled with the patient’s name and any valuables are handled according to Valuables Policy.
7. Notify Food and Nutrition to send plastic ware, instead of silverware on the patient’s meal tray.
8. The patient will not be permitted to leave their room except for a medically necessary test and must be accompanied by a RN.

B. Nursing Care:
1. Explain to the patient and/or family why he/she is on suicide precautions and the process involved.
2. An assessment of the patient’s suicide plan or ideation will be performed using a non-judgmental and therapeutic approach.
3. Initial assessment will include history of mental illness, patient’s appearance, mood, behavior and affect.
4. Assessment will be performed every 4 hours and as needed.
5. Suicide Precautions will be continued until the patient is discharged or transferred to another facility.
6. Patients and families will be provided with information on a crisis hotline and/or local resources for crisis situations.

Documentation: CPSI

References: Website – www.cdc.gov

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