

Sasha Bella Excellence in Family Centred Care Award: Elena Nikolsky
April 18, 2010

I would like to take this opportunity to nominate Elena Nikolsky for the 2010 Sasha Bella Excellence in Family Centred Care Award in Cardiac Critical Care. Elena is well deserving of this award and recognizing a gap, has made a formal commitment over the last 18 mo, to trying to improve our delivery of family centred care to families of children with cardiac disorders.

Clinical Excellence

Elena role models clinical excellence with respect to family centred care. In her current role as a Clinical Support nurse, Elena has consistently demonstrated behaviours that role model the principles of family centred care. Her initial interest, stemmed from several families of children that had been in our unit for extensive periods of time. She recognized some of the struggles that these families faced, and how staff may have, in some ways contributed to behaviours expressed by families under duress. She recognizes those behaviours by the health care team that is perceived to be beneficial by families. Elena has looked extensively into the literature to gain a greater understanding and has discussed her findings formally with her colleagues in 2010.

Teaching/Educational Skills

Elena has worked hard over the last 2 yrs to develop her own knowledge base in this area. She began this process as an extensive school assignment for her Master in Nursing Degree about 18 months ago. Elena performed and summarized for staff, a very extensive review of the literature. She then developed a poster "***Caring for Critically Ill Chronic Patients in a Cardiac Critical Care Unit: Challenges and Lessons to be Learned***" highlighting the stresses that families suffer facing the critical illness of their child and potential strategies for resolve. This poster was presented at an international conference in the Bahamas in February 2009, called Cardiology 2009, and provided a forum for networking, discussion and sharing of ideas.

Elena has formally disseminated her findings from the literature, as part of the Cardiac Mandatory Study Days in Cardiac Critical Care, in February & March of 2010. Elena developed and repeated the hour long presentation, on 6 education days, to Cardiac Critical Care Nurses. The name of the talk was "***Creating Opportunities for Enhancing Family Centred Care in Cardiac Critical Care.***" The objectives were to:

- utilize Family Stress and Coping Theory to develop strategies focused on enhancing strengths and coping/problem-solving abilities of families of children with congenital heart disease during prolonged hospitalization in the Cardiac Critical Care unit (CCCU)
- to communicate to CCCU practitioners the most common needs and stressors of parents in the PICU and the interventions that may decrease stress.
- to show the differences between nurses' and parents' perceptions of what is stressful about having a child in the CCCU

Some of these talks were post a night shift for Elena, another consideration supporting her level of commitment. Elena desires to ensure all nurses clearly understand the principles of family centred care and as well, understand the complexities associated with having a child in our Cardiac Critical Care Unit. The nurses valued her contribution to these Mandatory Cardiac Study days and expressed an increased understanding of complexities involved, especially when a child has cardiac disease of a chronic nature and is hospitalized for extensive periods.

With respect to teaching Elena has also been very active over the last 2 yrs in teaching the critical care nurses, to be competent practitioners at the bedside of patients in renal failure and requiring continuous renal replacement therapy (CRRT). This has involved facilitation of numerous wetlabs during Prismaflex training, as well as OSCE testing. She has supported the development of an extensive policy and procedure document on CRRT, as well as the multitude of revisions to the MD CRRT order sets.

Leadership Skills

Elena has taken considerable time and effort to develop her skills in family centred care. Elena has been preparing a formal proposal for project time to develop our Family centred care. In the winter, she prepared this proposal and will submit this in May 2010 to the Registered Nurses Association of Nurses of Ontario for an RNAO Fellowship. This is in hopes that RNAO will provide her with some funding to put towards dedicated time to develop a family centred care task force and move some of the ideas she has been thinking of, from text into action. Elena recognizes the stresses that families are under and is committed to helping to make a necessary change and to support nurses to reflect upon their interactions with families. This is a small part from her RNAO Fellowship proposal, in order for you to get a flavor of her intended work.

"Many pediatric clients and their families recognized that admission and hospitalization in the Cardiac Critical Care Unit (CCCU) represented the most stressful experiences of their life (Aldridge, 2005). According to Montagnino & Mauricio (2004), a family stressor can be defined as "a demand placed on the family that produces, or has the potential of producing, changes in the family system". Shady et al (2006) found that the correlation exists between family-staff communication and families' coping. Families' coping styles are often subject to judgments from the healthcare team. Insufficient support along with judgmental behaviour, exercised by health care providers, negatively affects the parent coping. The fellow recognizes that the nurses in the Cardiac Critical Care Unit at the Hospital for Sick Children experience a learning gap in the area of family stress and coping. Family-centered care in the unit is often compromised when a caregiver's stress and/or methods of coping are subjected to judgment by the CCCU healthcare team. Moreover, some types of behaviour adopted by the CCCU staff unintentionally increase families' stress level. In order to enhance the care all families receive, 130 members of the CCCU nursing staff will become participants of the proposed program.

The primary goal of this fellowship is to acquire extensive knowledge and expertise pertaining to the concept of family stress and coping, and to develop strategies focused on enhancing strengths and coping/problem-solving abilities of the CCCU families. The fellowship will allow the fellow:

1. To conduct a thorough assessment of what aspects of the disease and family dynamics present the most stress to families, and subsequently to develop plan for coping strategies both short and long-term.
2. Focus on development of an education plan for CCCU staff in the areas of parental stress and coping
3. Reinforce the principles of family-centered care as best practice in the pediatric hospital and help CCCU health practitioners to recognize families as integral partners in the care of their children.
4. Provide CCCU practitioners with the tools to prioritize families' needs and enhance adaptation.

The fellows' expertise will be obtained by working directly with the CCCU nursing team, CCU Nurse Educator and CCCU Nurse Practitioner, whom have extensive expertise in education, development, implementation and evaluation of various programs. The fellow will meet regularly with the mentor to plan the structure, development, and implementation of the program. Most of the learning experiences will take place at the Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto.

McCubbin and McCubbin's Resiliency Model of Family Stress, Adjustment, and Adaptation has been chosen as the framework for the project. This multi-dimensional framework specifically focuses on impact of stressful events on the family's adjustment and provides an indication of how the family will adapt to stressful circumstances. The framework helps to identify stressors and appraise families' coping patterns, problem-solving abilities and resistance recourses. The model supports the concept of the family centered practice - it helps health care practitioners to analyze the findings of a family assessment and plan and implement appropriate interventions accordingly

This fellowship is essential to the professional development of Cardiac Critical Care nurses, as it will provide a structured, support system, ensuring that the nurses possess sufficient knowledge regarding the most common needs and stressors of parents in the CCCU. This program will develop interventions that may decrease stress and enhance strengths and coping of the CCCU families. This fellowship will result in enhanced ability of Cardiac Critical Care staff to incorporate the unique strengths and vulnerabilities of each individual family member and client's families into their plan of care."

Professional accomplishments

Elena completed the Advanced Cardiac Critical Care course in 2005. She is an efficient Clinical Support nurse who is near completion of her Master in Nursing.

Family Centred Care:

Exerts from Family Teaching

Elena is an excellent nurse and a role model for family centred care. Her contributions to clinical and professional expertise have been significant and she is ambitious and concerned about the status quo enough to try and make a difference in family centred care in our Cardiac Critical Care Unit.

Thank you in advance for considering her a worthy candidate for this award.

Cecilia St. George-Hyslop
 Cecilia St. George-Hyslop, BScN, RN, M Ed, CNCCP(C)
 Advanced Nursing Practice Educator, Cardiac Critical Care