Purpose
To determine if offering a diversional cart for our behavioral health (BH) patients being evaluated in the ED would decrease agitation, the need for additional sedation medication, and the amount of time the nurse is needed at the bedside.

Background
The BH population holding in the ED is a growing national trend. Patients are often agitated and the over stimulating environment in the ED often increases agitation, requiring the need for sedation medication. There was a need to look at other options to provide the patient other than medication, restraints, and seclusion.

Design
This design was a prospective pilot study. The use of an evidence-based practice model guided the Shared Governance team in the ED to implement this study.

Setting
A rural hospital, which is part of a private, not for profit healthcare system located in the Southeastern United States, was the setting for this study. Specifically, the study was conducted in a 23 bed emergency department with a census of 37,000 patients a year. Two percent of the population seen have a primary behavioral health diagnosis with the average length of stay of 14 hours.

Participants/Subjects
Only patients in the ED being cared for with a BH diagnosis and who were over the age of 18 were included. Patients who had a diagnosis of bipolar manic and schizophrenia were excluded.

METHODS
Once the patient was seen by the ED provider, the nurse offered the BH patient the opportunity to participate in the study, explained the purpose of the diversional activity cart, and obtained a consent if they agreed to participate. The diversional cart was brought to the patient’s room and they were allowed to choose an item off the cart such as: a crossword puzzle, word search, nature sound maker, playing cards, drawing tablet, and other safe items. The nurse caring for the patient completed an observation tool to determine the patient’s level of anxiety pre and post cart utilization. The nurse also documented on the data collection tool if sedation medication was given during the timeframe of the activity cart and was also asked to tally the number of interactions with the patient during the timeframe the patient utilized the cart.

RESULTS
The results showed to be significant. Fifty percent of the patients that participated had a decrease in their anxiety level reported by the nurses’ observation anxiety scale. Eighty percent of the nurses who completed the survey showed that the diversional cart was extremely helpful with the care of the BH patient. The results also showed a decrease in sedation medication required by patients. During the utilization of the diversional cart, only 5 percent of the patients required sedation medications.

CONCLUSIONS
This study has shown that providing a diversional activity cart to our BH patients being cared for in an over populated and noisy environment did help decrease the patient’s anxiety level and the amount of sedation medication required. The ED nurses also reported there was a time saving benefit related to less dispensing of medications and less intensive monitoring requirements. The impact to leadership in conducting this study showed the need for them to continue providing the activity cart to maintain both patient and employee satisfaction.

REFERENCES

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