

Risk management by the Early Recognition Method in patients with Huntington's disease

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Background

The most common behavioral problems in patients with Huntington's disease (HD) are addressed adequately by nurses aiming to avoid escalation or crisis. However, in case aggression or escalation is imminent, it is important to identify early warning signs of aggression. The Early Recognition Method (ERM) is a risk management strategy developed in (forensic) psychiatric care, aiming to improve collaboration between nurses and patients in order to prevent aggression.

Aims

To explore the feasibility of ERM Risk Management by recognition of early warning signs and monitoring behaviors from stability to deterioration in HD patients in a long term care facility (Figure 1).

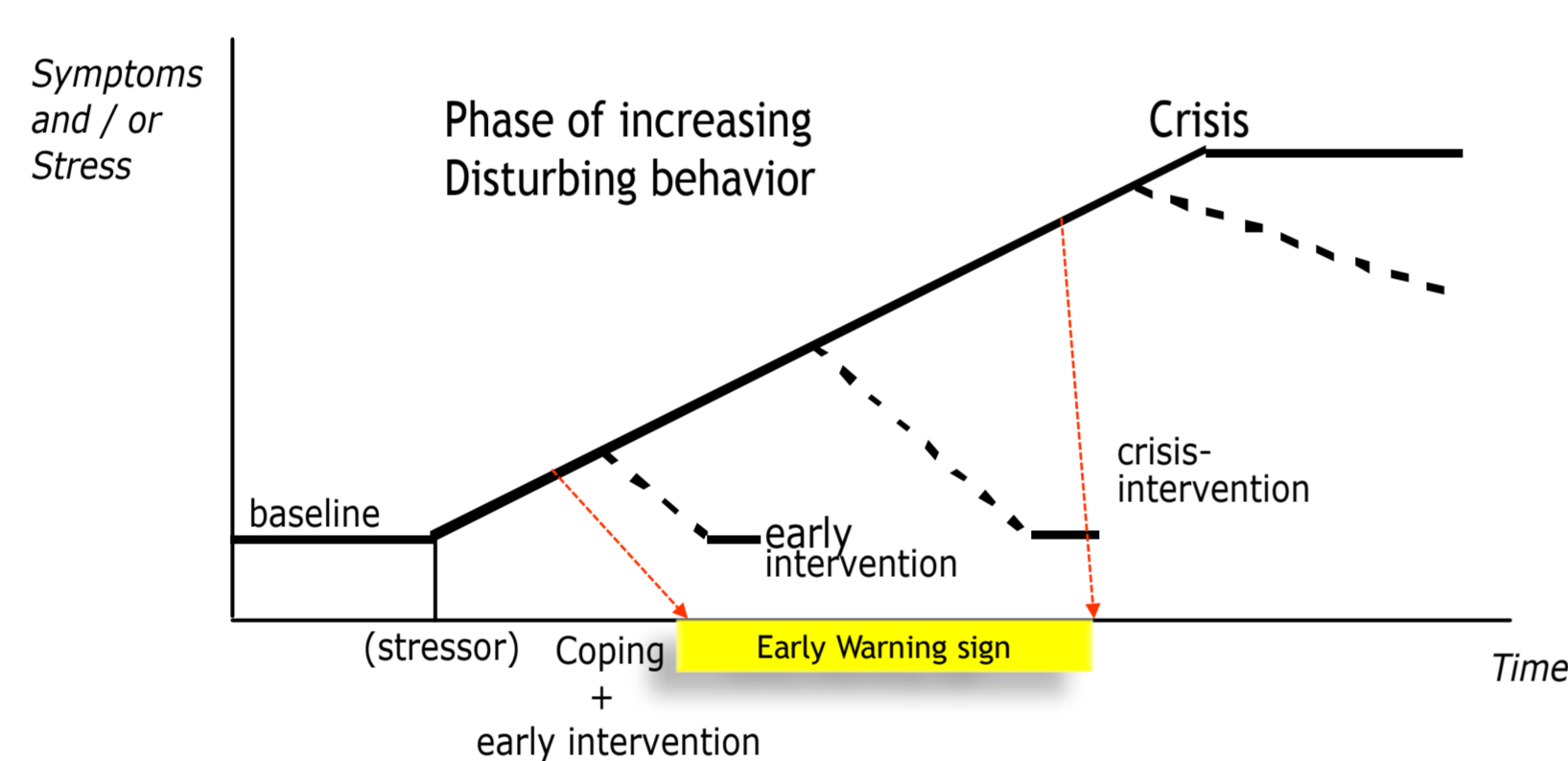


Figure 1. The process of deteriorating behavior

Results

ERM was introduced on 2 Skilled Nursing Facilities. All nurses followed the training program and they showed enthusiasm to apply the ERM protocol in clinical practice. The first experiences are positive. However, due to communication issues, not in all eligible cases the early warning signs were discussed with the patients. In those cases, nurses just shared their observations within the team. Nurses reported an increased alertness for small behavioral changes. Some patients show their active involvement in the way they adopt elements of ERM when discussing their behavior with nurses or family.

Conclusions

The preliminary results suggest that ERM may contribute to effective behavioral management for nurses in HD patients living in a long term care facility.

Methods

The ERM strategy is described in the ERM-protocol (Figure 2). In a training program the nursing staff learned to apply the protocol. In weekly evaluations early warning signs of aggression are explored and discussed between nurses and patients. When early warning signs arise, nurse and patient carry out early interventions in order to stabilize patient's behavior. The effects of applying ERM will be studied by comparing the number and severity of incidents in the period before and after ERM is implemented. Outcome measures are: number of incidents, team climate (EssenCES) and behavior (BOSH).

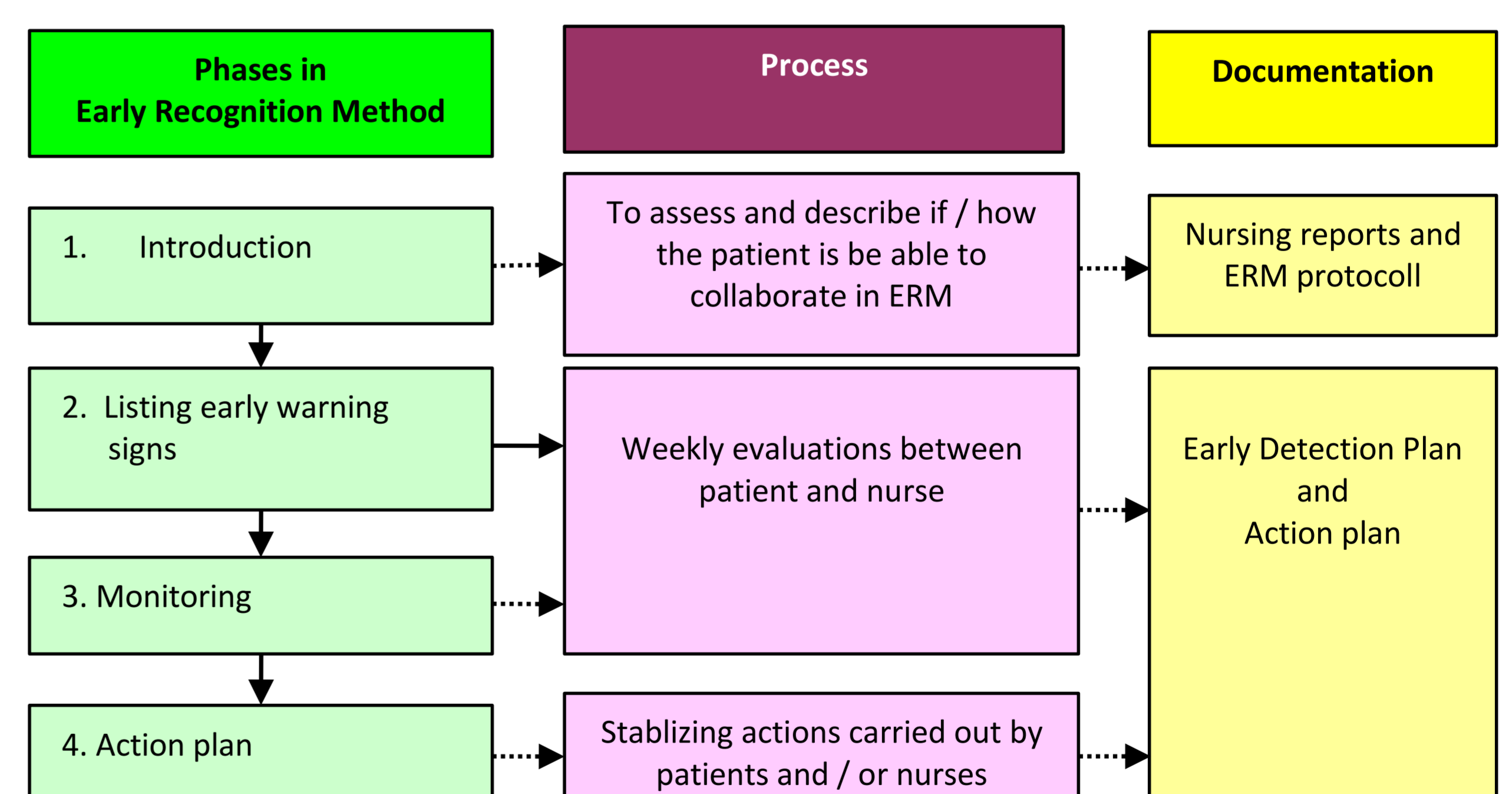


Figure 2. Protocol ERM risk management

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