The importance of decreasing noise in health care has been recognized for years. Noise is a significant barrier to sleep for acute care hospital patients. Post anesthesia patients have an even greater need for protection from excess noise.

The purpose was twofold. First we assessed the actual and perceived noise level in the PACU on a typical day to see if we were under the recommended noise threshold. Second, we developed a noise reduction campaign to achieve the recommended levels.

The EXTECH DIGITAL SOUND METER found that we were above the noise threshold of 45 db the entire day with lows in the 60s with spikes into the 80s.

We surveyed 28 patients and staff about the perception of noise in the PACU. Patients rated noise as 3.6 on a scale of 1-10. The 16 nurses who responded to the perceived noise survey rated noise for the patient as 5.2 on the 1-10 scale. They also rated noise as making it difficult to concentrate. The PACU Noise Reduction Team (PNRT) has identified actions aimed at decreasing the noise level. Every month a new campaign is introduced to help reduce the noise levels.

By actively trying to reduce the level of noise in our PACU, not only did we increase patient satisfaction, but staff satisfaction as well.

Noise reduction was thought to solely help with patient satisfaction, but our project demonstrated the need for noise reduction for the Perianesthesia nurse to alleviate distractions when critical thinking skills are needed.