Purpose: Patients with left ventricular assist devices (LVAD) present with special requirements to Post-Anesthesia nurses (PACU). The hospital LVAD program has experienced significant growth over four years. In 2008, we performed more LVAD implants than heart transplants. Previously, patients with this device were monitored by a certified technician during transport. Patients receive tremendous discharge instructions enabling them to care for their device at home with phone support only. Therefore, technician support was removed from patients who were independent prior to hospitalization. However, in the operating room and PACU, patients are often not capable of managing their device due to sedation or anesthesia. To develop a process for safely transporting and caring for stable LVAD patients who are admitted for procedures, a PACU LVAD committee was formed to increase knowledge and safety.

Description: Educational needs for PACU staff prompted the formation of a core group to become LVAD certified. Our cardio-thoracic intensive care unit (CTICU) provides education and yearly certification regarding LVAD patients. PACU and CTICU clinical nurse specialists collaborated to organize certification of six PACU nurses. PACU nurses were selected based on criteria: previous ICU experience and years of employment.

Outcome: All six nurses received certification. Written committee expectations and LVAD information were placed in the unit newsletter and the website for reference. Future plans include inservices to staff regarding LVAD function, capabilities, and management, utilizing staff committee members as content experts to answer questions, maintain certification of core committee, and to send additional staff for certification.