EXPANDING THE ROLE OF THE PRE-SURGICAL NURSE IN CARING FOR
PATIENTS UNDERGOING EPIDURAL CATHETER PLACEMENT

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Background: Epidural catheters were being placed in the Pre-Surgical Center with limited RN
involvement and monitored by anesthesia. Due to the nature of the oncologic patient, conscious
sedation was often administered for placement of the catheter. As the number of pre-op epidurals
increased, standards needed to be established for the care of these patients.

Objective: A process improvement establishing standards and nursing competencies for the care
of the patient receiving conscious sedation undergoing epidural catheter placement in Pre –
Surgical Center.

Implementation: A multi-disciplinary group including nurses, anesthesia, nursing assistants and
nursing education discussed current process, conducted literature review and strategized on
methods of improvement. Utilizing the American Society of Peri-Anesthesia Guidelines, an
educational competency program was developed and standards were established for caring for
patients undergoing conscious sedation in the pre-surgical area.

Successful practice: By re-defining the role and competencies of the Pre-Surgical RN, we have
maintained ASPAN standards for the management and monitoring of conscious sedation
patients. All nurses completed dysrhythmia training for continuous cardiac monitoring, attended
a conscious sedation class and were required to attend a unit based in-service. The nurse to
patient ratio was decreased and the Pre-Surgical nursing documentation revised. In addition, we
have increased patient safety in the Pre-Surgical area, through active involvement of all members
of the health care team in the time out verification process.

Implications for advancing practice: Expanding the role of the PSC RN provides safe
monitoring of patients undergoing conscious sedation while advocating for the patient during
sedation and recovery.