THE PACU: A NEW APPROACH TO INCREASE CLINICAL PLACEMENTS FOR NURSING STUDENTS

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Background: In 2009, the Post Anesthesia Care Unit (PACU) of a tertiary children’s hospital was approached by the organization’s Professional Development department to accept a nursing student for a basic pediatric nursing rotation. As a leader in pediatric healthcare, this facility receives ever increasing requests for student placements by regional nursing programs. The PACU responded by creating placements for both basic pediatric and senior practicum nursing students.

Objective: Create nursing student rotations in the PACU that meet clinical course objectives and allow the placement of an increased number of nursing students at our hospital.

Implementation: A dedicated group of preceptors was identified. PACU student nurse guidelines were developed utilizing the institution’s student nurse manual. The PACU began accepting students in 2009 and since then has provided placements for 24 basic pediatric students and 6 senior practicum students.

Statement of successful practice: Students have consistently reported a high level of satisfaction with their PACU rotation on course evaluations and have met the clinical objectives of their pediatric rotations. Preceptors also have reported satisfying and enjoyable opportunities working with students while promoting and demonstrating clinical expertise in the PACU. Two of the senior practicum students have obtained employment in the hospital.

Implications for advancing practice: The PACU can be successful placement for student nurses where they have the opportunity to practice many skills, among them frequent vital signs and assessments, airway management, and medication administration. A PACU rotation promotes the perianesthesia practice to future nurses.