EMERGENCE AGITATION: WHAT IT IS AND WHAT CAN WE DO?
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Emergence agitation is a disordered state that can negatively effect the PACU environment and family dynamics in a clinical setting. Eckenhoff\(^1\) first described it in 1961 as a state of confusion postanesthetic. In our facility, most cases coincide with the original findings of Eckenhoff, our patients are less than 9 years old, have procedures with short duration of anesthetics, and are generally preoperatively anxious.

We hope to gain insight on emergence agitation, to seek out preventions for patients recognized as predisposed to it, and prepare staff and families how to cope when patients are agitated.

Our process of implementation included decreasing the stress in a preoperative setting, utilizing calm environments and play therapy to distract and decrease anxiety in patients and families. Another step included parents during the induction phase of anesthesia and upon arrival to the recovery room to be reunited with their child. Important to decreasing emergence agitation was the use of adequate intraoperative pain control, and increase use of caudal and spinal anesthetics.

Our staff currently is well-versed in the care of the child in emergence agitation and continues to maintain a calm environment throughout. We use distraction techniques preoperatively and have a high standard for adequately medicating the child for pain.

As emergence agitation can be dangerous to patient and staff, it is imperative all nurses know to differentiate it from other potential causes of agitation. Careful teaching of staff along with techniques for decreasing anxiety can be important aspects of reducing emergence agitation.