At our institution there are separate adult and pediatric Post Anesthesia Care Units (PACU). The perianesthesia educational team serves both areas. There was a shortage of staff in the pediatric PACU (Peds PACU), and thus a need to develop competencies for adult PACU nurses who wished to work additional hours in the Peds PACU.

The education team worked to develop an orientation program for experienced adult PACU nurses who wished to be pediatric competent. Self studies and verbal competencies were developed utilizing pediatric critical care and perianesthesia resources. These materials included pediatric-specific information on airway management, fluid electrolyte balance, pain management, age specific milestones, and temperature management. A resource manual of surgical summaries, written by Peds PACU nurses, was also created.

All interested nurses were required to obtain their Pediatric Advanced Life Support certification within six months. Once these nurses completed the competencies, they were also scheduled for hands on orientation in the Peds PACU. Nurses were required to work in this area at least monthly to maintain this capacity. Several nurses have completed the program and have been able to assist the Peds PACU during their busiest times.

In the future, we will continue to use these materials for training and preparation for certification examinations.

Programs that focus on increasing competency in a specialized population can be developed, but must include on-going opportunity to care for this population to cement learning.