Purpose: Our patient care technicians (PCTs) assist the nurse at the bedside. Yearly skills days would show that PCTs were competent in these tasks. However, performance at the bedside varied widely between PCTs. Nurses expected consistent actions from all PCTs. The leadership team questioned whether PCTs should have two separate groups: transport only or bedside care and transport. To make this distinction, an assessment of critical thinking skills was suggested.

Description: The Post Anesthesia Care Unit (PACU) clinical educator and lead charge nurse devised an evaluation tool that placed the PCT in a simulation bay with props to evaluate their critical thinking skills. A model was placed on a stretcher in a bay to represent a patient with an intravenous, arterial line, and urinary catheter. One PCT at a time was asked to the bay, given a scenario, and asked to perform PCT admission tasks. The evaluation started with placing the ‘patient’ on the monitor. They also were expected to connect, level, and zero the arterial line, and attach the intermittent compression stockings to a pump. The evaluators watched while these tasks were performed. The PCTs would be prompted with information such as a temperature of 35.5 and a urine output of 15. Expected actions were: suggesting hypothermia blanket and making sure data hand off occurred to nurse.

Outcome: All PCTs passed the critical thinking test. All PCTs continue to perform transport and bedside duties. The PCTs were pleased with their performance in the scenarios.