Based on current Post Anesthesia Care Unit (PACU) throughput issues in a Magnet® hospital, the need for developing a medical-surgical patient overflow area was addressed. ASPAN Position Statement 7 was utilized to recognize the responsibility of the perianesthesia units to provide optimal standard of care for our surgical patients and maintain flow of the surgery schedule. A workgroup was formed consisting of staff and charge nurses from the PACU and the Surgical Staging Unit (SSU), director, nurse manager, and unit based educator.

An algorithm was developed to determine appropriate patients to be moved from the PACU into the overflow setting. Rooms were established by the management team for use in the adjacent SSU. To provide safe, consistent care, a core group of nursing staff was assembled from both units to complement hospital float staff. Necessary equipment and supplies were identified by the group and stocked in the area. Education was offered to ensure competencies of care, documentation, and handoff. Resource nurses were identified to collaborate with staff as needed. Currently, charge nurses work together to assure staffing needs for both units are being met.

Goals achieved include: established method to identify patients for the overflow setting which affords them a quieter, more private environment with full family visitation; improved workflow and decreased Operating Room holds; refined the daily allocation plan of staff resources; and, maintenance of quality patient care. Working towards these common goals and enhancing communication between the units, has also improved staff satisfaction.