CALMING THE CHAOS:
A DAILY SURVIVAL KIT FOR NAVIGATING THE PERI-OPERATIVE PATIENT

Team Leader: Debra L. Bennett-Carey, RN, MSN
Advocate Christ Medical Center, Oak Lawn, IL

Team Members: Vicky Williams, RT (R), MA; Maggie Colabuono, RN, CPAN, CAPA;
Katie Stalter, RN, BSN, CNOR; Cindy Monachos, RN, BS, CNOR, RNFA;
Erin Slade-Smith, RN, BS; Charlene McCabe, RN, BS, CNOR;
Jim Waters, MBA; Kenneth Jurniak, MA

The daily challenges for patient throughput within surgical services continue across the nation. Typically, the Operating Room represents over 40% of a hospital’s revenue. With increased patient acuity, decreased ICU and inpatient bed availability, and a space constrained PACU; the situation was challenging on many days. Adding to the chaos was continuous high hospital census, stressed and frustrated surgical services staff due to delays and overnight holds, surgeons and anesthesiologists “rounding” looking for a space for their patient being held in the OR, and management being expected to maintain costs and improve efficiency.

The delay in admissions to the PACU resulted in: disruption of patient flow due to patients’ inability to leave the OR, physician and nursing staff inconvenience/dissatisfaction, increase surgical costs, and loss of revenue. The main objective of this project was to improve patient flow thru the OR, PACU, Day Surgery, and/or inpatient units. A secondary objective is improved physician, staff, and patient satisfaction.

A performance improvement project identified delay reasons for PACU admission i.e. staff or space. A second performance improvement project identified the barriers for patient flow excluding bed delays. These barriers were stratified into categories for further workflow processes.

Numerous workflow processes were developed to improve patient flow with a statistically relevant decrease in OR holds, increase in physician satisfaction, and patient satisfaction. A review of the nursing quality indicators will be re-assessed after the current associate satisfaction survey is completed.