STAY JUST A LITTLE BIT LONGER: EXTENDED RECOVERY IN THE PACU

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Background Information: Endovascular Aneurysm Repair (EVAR) for Abdominal Aortic
Aneurysms and Carotid Endarterectomy (CEA) procedures historically warranted an ICU
admission. Evidence supports that ICU monitoring for uncomplicated, elective procedures is not
always necessary and misallocates costly ICU admissions. Patients undergoing these procedures
who meet specific criteria can be safely transferred to the progressive care unit (PCU) after a
six-hour extended stay in the Post Anesthesia Care Unit (PACU).

Objectives of Project: Create an evidence-based PACU Extended Stay program for patients
post EVAR or CEA surgeries who meet inclusion criteria in order to facilitate safe transfer to the
PCU postoperatively.

Process of Implementation: Evidence-based guidelines and order sets were developed to use
when caring for extended stay patients in the PACU. This involved multidisciplinary
 collaboration with vascular surgery, nursing, and pharmacy. Education opportunities on caring
for this patient population were provided for both PACU and PCU nurses.

Statement of Successful Practice: To date, 22 patients have been admitted to PACU under the
Extended Stay Program. Twenty-one of those patients successfully completed their extended
stay and were safely transferred to the PCU. Complications (hemodynamic instability and
surgical site bleeding) were identified in 2 of the 22 patients during their six-hour extended stay
in PACU. In one case, a hypotensive patient was upgraded to ICU status. Another patient
returned to the OR for a postoperative site bleed repair, returned to PACU, completed the
extended stay and safely transferred to the PCU. Of the 21 patients that transferred to the PCU,
none had complications resulting in transfer to the ICU. In addition, 17 of the 21 patients
admitted to the PCU from PACU Extended Stay were discharged home post-operative day one.
Averting ICU admission has proved to result in a significant cost savings for these patients.

Implications for Advancing the Practice of Perianesthesia Nursing: Capacity management
issues and cost savings have become priorities in healthcare today. PACUs are faced with
holding patients longer and facilitating creative solutions to extend recoveries after surgery to
decrease overall hospital length of stay. PACUs can safely implement an Extended Stay program
to help reduce unnecessary ICU admissions and maintain optimal patient outcomes.