

WEIGHT WATCHERS: WEIGHT VERIFICATION FOR PEDIATRIC SURGICAL PATIENTS

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Medications are formulated and packaged primarily for adult dosages, and as such weight-based dosing calculations and tasks are required for the pediatric population. This presents many opportunities for medication errors that are related to inaccurate patient weights being measured and/or recorded.

A survey of the preoperative process determined that (a) the weighing scales were not locked in kilograms; (b) trauma patients have estimated weights that were unverified even after stabilization; (c) EMR weight entries allow for both lbs. and kg.; and (d) a confusion between lbs vs. kg among parents and clinicians.

OBJECTIVES OF PROJECT:

To reduce medication errors by 50% in the OR and PACU due to imprecise weight entries; to increase awareness of importance of pediatric weight verification prior to surgery; and to standardize the measuring and recording of pediatric patient weights to kilograms throughout the hospital stay.

PROCESS OF IMPLEMENTATION:

The pre-operative communication checklist was updated to include a weight verification box for the RN or PCA. Staff education on the importance and implementation of the new checklist was done. The process included weighing all pediatric surgery patients using the approved scale locked in kilograms only; staff member then asks the parent if the weight obtained is within the usual that they expect; and verifies with another clinician. Weight discrepancies were then reported using reports card or by email. Weekly audits to monitor compliance with the verification of weights were done.

STATEMENT OF SUCCESSFUL PRACTICE:

Prior to the intervention, 5 inaccurate weight entries with actual or potential medication errors in the OR from January-June 2013. The checklist was implemented in August 2013. Compliance with the verification checklist from October to December 2013 was 90-95%. Pediatric weight verification prior to surgery resulted in zero surgical patients with incorrect weight recorded from July-December 2013.

IMPLICATION FOR ADVANCING THE PRACTICE OF PERIANESTHESIA NURSING:

The surgical and anesthesia team was included in the improvement of the weight verification process. Weight verification is now in the surgical checklist during "time-out". This process assisted an interdisciplinary team of physicians, nurses, IT personnel, and pharmacists to improve the process of weighing, documentation, and utilization of standardized scales throughout the hospital.