

DOUBLE AGENTS:

CROSS TRAINING PACU NURSES TO INPATIENT OPERATING ROOM CIRCULATORS

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Staffing vacancies can often not be avoided. Prompted by a severe staffing crisis in the inpatient operating room, a concept was developed to cross train post anesthesia care unit (PACU) nurses to circulate general surgery cases in the inpatient operating room (OR).

A current review of the literature suggests that the practice of cross training PACU nurses is either not common or not well documented in the inpatient OR setting. Staff was surveyed to identify barriers and concerns to cross training into the OR. Both the inpatient operating room and perianesthesia managers collaborated with the operating room educator to develop a modified and focused orientation to circulate specific types of general surgeries.

OBJECTIVES OF PROJECT:

Successfully cross train PACU nurse to circulate simple general surgery cases.

PROCESS OF IMPLEMENTATION:

Orientation for experienced OR nurses in an inpatient OR can range up to six months due to the specialty and complexity of cases. A four-week orientation was outlined that highlighted positioning, specimen labeling, counts, sterilization and sutures. Two specific PACU nurses were selected based on their prior interest in OR nursing and adaptable personalities. Weekly progress reports were carefully monitored and compiled.

STATEMENT OF SUCCESSFUL PRACTICE:

After orientation, the two PACU nurses successfully now circulate independently in general surgery cases. Moreover, they are expanding their scope to circulate cardiothoracic and neurosurgery cases. The nurses work one shift a week in the OR until three o'clock then staff in PACU during the peak volume time. A post survey revealed that staffing and resource adequacy as well as satisfaction and a perception of teamwork increased.

IMPLICATIONS FOR ADVANCING THE PRACTICE OF PERIANESTHESIA NURSING:

Cross training staff to an unfamiliar area can be rewarding and challenging. Innovatively orienting PACU nurses as OR circulators allow for more adaptability and flexibility in staffing both units as well as better accommodate a changing OR schedule.