

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.