

## **AN INTERPROFESSIONAL APPROACH TO HYPOTHERMIA PREVENTION IN THE PERIOPERATIVE SETTING**

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**Background Information:** While hypothermia may be intentionally induced in some perioperative patients (e.g., risk of neurological damage following cardiac arrest), maintenance of normothermia is more commonplace to diminish negative sequelae like prolonged recovery times, altered drug metabolism, and wound infections. Inadvertent perioperative hypothermia (IPH) can result from low ambient room temperature, general anesthesia resulting in peripheral vasoconstriction, and patient factors (e.g., elderly, very young, major trauma or burns). Variations in IPH prevention practices, financial impacts, and a commitment to improving patient outcomes prompted the development of an IPH awareness campaign.

**Objectives of Project:** The purpose of this quality improvement project was to use an evidence-based approach to re-educate perioperative staff regarding the rationale and methods for maintaining normothermia.

**Process of Implementation:** The PACU nursing director engaged interprofessional partners (e.g., clinicians, nurse leaders, and anesthesia health care providers) in appraisal of the extant literature (including ASPAN's normothermia clinical guidelines) and charged nurse clinicians and the educator with developing in-services targeting optimal core temperature, clinical manifestations associated with mild, moderate and severe hypothermia, environmental factors, and potential complications associated with IPH. Problem-based learning, case studies, critical thinking exercises, and peer support from tenured nurses to less experienced personnel were among educational pedagogies that were utilized.

**Statement of Successful Practice:** The expectation was that staff would implement a normothermia algorithm and document interventions. When the project began, the staffs' compliance rate was 50%. Following the education, compliance increased to 100% and patients' lengths of stay decreased by 10%. Improving patient outcomes was undeniably the goal of this project; however, the change with the most impact was among the staff. The nurses are more confident, committed to proactively providing safe care, and use an evidence-based framework which has resulted in anecdotal reports of empowerment.

**Implications for Advancing the Practice of Perianesthesia Nursing:** The program afforded an opportunity to incorporate evidence-based standards of care, imbue nurses and anesthesia health care providers with unique interprofessional perspectives, and create partnerships to place patients in the best position for optimal perioperative outcomes.