



# Communication Handoff Tool Improving Patient Safety & Patient OR Readiness

Shared Governance Project Alliance between PreAdmission Testing and Surgical Preparation & Discharge

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## Purpose

Upon admission to the surgical preparation unit, essential communication handoff elements are necessary for the nurse in preparing the patient for the Operating Room (OR). These elements play an active role in determining appropriate patient care and deem patient readiness. Concomitantly, preadmission testing nurses acquire these key components either from a phone interview or a face-to-face interview before the day of surgery. A disconnect in this relaying of information gained attention and a desire to improve such process between the unit's nurses began to evolve.

## Introduction

The pursuit of enhancing patient safety became the driving force behind the undertaking of this project. According to Jukkala, A. et al, the Joint Commission recently reported that poor communication is leading cause of all sentinel events and that one third of all patient handoffs are defective. Two nursing units within Surgical Services at Virtua Voorhees, discovered a need to improve written communication between PreAdmission Testing and Surgical Prep & Discharge. This was in an effort to expedite a patient's readiness for the OR while focusing on key handoff components to improve patient safety.

## Clinical Problems

- Area of improvement noted in how to streamline essential communication initially acquired through the preadmission interview process
- Key elements as related to patient care inconsistently documented
- Understanding whereby some information obtained may not be appropriate to enter in the medical chart, but it does however serve to be important in its dissemination and acknowledgement.

## Implementation

- Email extended to 2 units within Surgical Services regarding the rationale for the tool and its implementation date
- Thirty days following its inception, an email was sent out inviting positive or constructive feedback
- The 2 Shared Governance teams reconvened to evaluate feedback and determine the necessary changes to the original tool's components; consensus stratified the needs of the 2 units while trying to honor employee requests.



## Methods

- Literature Review: (see bibliography)
- Collaboration of 2 Shared Governance teams within Surgical Services through an open opportunity for discussion and implementation following consensus
- Development of a communication handoff tool to streamline pertinent patient information as a means to expedite a patient's readiness for the OR

## Results

- Improves patient safety
- Improves staff accountability
- Creates a standardization of where to document pertinent information, even when information proves ill-placed in the medical chart
- Forges a cooperative work environment between 2 units with an enriched communication instrument
- Decreases preoperative surgical nurse stress during hectic admission periods



## Conclusions

A critical concept in the development of a standardized communication tool is obtaining guidance and feedback from the professionals at the “sharp end” of care (Jukkala, A. et al. 2012). Therefore after its 30 day introductory period, the overall climate since the debut of the new handoff tool was that of great positivity. Upon the reconvening of the two teams, only minor form adaptations were made. The majority of perioperative nurses found the tool crucial and beneficial in helping them quickly identify essential patient's nursing needs and make for a smoother, timely admission process.

Additionally, the preadmission testing nurses felt that perhaps the key components were underestimated for their chain reaction significance and following rationale, understood the importance in nursing collaboration in contributing to the best possible surgical journey for our patients.

## Bibliography

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