

Increasing PACU Certification and Recognition During COVID-19 Pandemic

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Background Information: High certification rates can represent skilled registered nurses' commitment to nursing professionalism. Research has shown that higher specialty certification rates are associated with better patient outcomes and a higher sense of nursing empowerment. NYU Langone Orthopedic Hospital has a goal of 51% nursing certification for Magnet re-designation. In 2018, the PACU nursing certification rate was 43%. Limitations to obtaining certification include costs, inadequate incentives, weak interest, poor access to resources, and stressors.

Objectives of Project: To increase the certification rate in the PACU and achieve a goal of 60% by March 2022.

Process of Implementation: In 2018, a survey was distributed to PACU nurses on barriers and motivators for achieving certification. Based on the results, leadership, certified nurses, and nurse educators used a team approach and implemented strategies to increase certification rates. Certification coaches mentored eligible nurses throughout the certification process and formed study groups. Pertinent information about certification was shared through flyers and resource tables. To increase their knowledge, nurses received peer-to-peer education or presentations from content experts during in-services, special event, and conferences. Newly certified nurses were recognized during a pinning ceremony. Due to the restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, strategies were modified to comply with social distancing guidelines. For example, pinning ceremonies and in-person events had limited participants. Nurses embraced technology by distributing certification information via email, video conferencing educational presentations, and using phone-based application learning platforms. Certified nurses were recognized on the hospital website, newsletters, emails, and a photo wall.

Statement of Successful Practice: Despite the challenges, nurses remained motivated to continue to study, become certified, and celebrate their peers. The PACU certification rate increased by 18.3% due to the implementation of informational, celebratory, and supportive strategies. As of October 2021, the PACU certification rate is 61.3%.

Implications for Advancing the Practice of Perianesthesia Nursing: Implications for advancing the practice of perianesthesia nursing by increasing the number of certified nurses is the use of certification coaches, certification information sharing, obtaining study resources, educational opportunities offerings, and nursing recognition. Continued support is essential to a culture that values life-long learning and professional development.