

## **The ART of Caring for the Pediatric Anesthesia Patient in the Proton Therapy Center**

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**Background:** Research shows that the use of art therapy can be a valuable tool in the care of pediatric patients dealing with illness and cancer. MDAnderson Cancer Center has an outpatient Proton Therapy Center with a 3-bed PACU for pediatric cancer patients undergoing treatment that may require daily anesthesia for up to 30 days. The RNs are responsible for the pre-procedure and post-procedure care of the anesthesia patient. At the Proton Therapy Center, we have a unique form of art therapy that started in 2016 that has significantly impacted the daily interaction with over 100 children and family members.

### **Objectives of the project:**

- Promote an outlet for expression, distraction, and coping with illness
- Provides a form of autonomy in decision-making in the selection of project
- Help in developing rapport and gaining trust with the pediatric patient

**Process of implementation:** The PACU RN's daily encounters with the pediatric patient include time for discovery of the child's interests in toys, animated characters, foods, and pets. We are fortunate to have one of our RNs whose qualities include caring, integrity, and discovery. The art project begins to take shape during the daily treatment, and changes may be made based on the child's input. Those changes may include additional characters, color changes, and anything the child wants to personalize their project.

**Statement of Successful Practice:** As verbalized by our parents, the apprehensive, scared, and anxious child we met on the first day of treatment now looks forward to coming to daily treatments. Their interactions become more enthusiastic and playful. The art project is given to the child upon completion of therapy during the graduation ceremony.

**Implications for Advancing the Practice of PeriAnesthesia Nursing:** Working daily with pediatric anesthesia patients receiving Proton Therapy is unique from a perioperative perspective because most post-surgical settings have only one encounter with the patient. Taking advantage of the amount of time spent with these patients and families allows the PACU RN to develop a special relationship and unique caring therapies unavailable in a post-surgical setting.