

**Nurse Led Collaboration and Innovation:
Relieving Bed Shortage by Creating an Extended Recovery Unit (ERU)**

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Background Information: A major, integrated health care system in the Northeast has been impacted by increasing capacity pressures for inpatient, emergency, and perioperative patients. The Covid Pandemic has contributed to more patients requiring care and fewer resources to provide that care. As part of a capacity management plan, a Magnet-designated 171-bed community teaching hospital prepared to create an efficient, high-quality Extended Recovery Unit (ERU) for post-surgical patients. Perioperative staff were engaged to support developing the structure needed to safely care for this new group of patients.

Objectives of Project: To create a department process for an ERU that provides high-quality, efficient care to surgical patients who meet the criteria for an expedited discharge home.

Process of Implementation: After a leadership decision to create an ERU, key nursing staff in the Perianesthesia department were appointed to support its development.

Central steps in the process included:

- Identification and orientation of staff to implement the ERU
- Identification of patients who meet the criteria for an early discharge home the morning after surgery.
- Development of an electronic triage tool to identify eligible patients.
- Collaboration with multiple providers, hospital inpatient staff and support services to develop expedited pathways for care.
- Creating a process of caring for and discharging ERU patients without impacting the quality of care for those patients or patients receiving care the next day in the same space.

Statement of Successful Practice: After two successful trials, a permanent ERU was opened in November 2022. Although still in its early stages, the ERU has successfully created additional space for patients, prevented the need to cancel scheduled surgeries, reduced hospital length of stay by an estimated 4-6 hours, and maintained quality patient care.

Implications for Advancing the Practice of Perianesthesia Nursing: With their broad knowledge base, peri-anesthesia nurses possess the ability to collaborate effectively with all entities of the hospital to develop a new system of care for patients. Implementing an ERU with perioperative nurses at the helm provides post-op patients with high-quality care and efficient early discharge home while relieving some of the pressure of bed shortages throughout the hospital.