

**Special Needs Assessment and Plan (SNAP) for Perioperative Patients
on the Autism Spectrum and Other Developmental Disabilities**

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Background information related to the problem identification: Limitations in social interaction and communication difficulties in patients with developmental disabilities, including autism, impact the level of stress experienced during hospitalization. The CDC and HRSA have identified that one in six U.S. children have developmental disabilities, with 1 in 59 diagnosed with autism. Autistic patients require preoperative services, but the stress that they experience may be greater than patients who do not have developmental disabilities. Evidence supports using a Special Needs Assessment and Plan (SNAP) to screen for potential special needs and to create a plan of care for patients with developmental disabilities.

Objective of the Project: The project aimed to develop and implement a customized care plan for patients with developmental disabilities requiring anesthesia for diagnostic or surgical procedures to avoid exacerbating caregivers' and patients' stress levels during the preoperative phase.

Process of Implementation: A multidisciplinary team was formed with perianesthesia nurses and support staff, anesthesia providers, and a child life specialist as members. The team identified strategies for an improved pathway to reduce or prevent overstimulation and adapted the SNAP questionnaire to develop an individualized coping plan. A visual cue on the OR Tracker board was used to improve interdisciplinary handoff by including information on triggers and effective coping methods. A questionnaire using a Visual Analog Scale was used to collect data to compare caregiver and patient stress levels on a typical day versus the hospital visit once patients were in OR/procedure area.

Statement of Successful Practice: Screening and customized plans were implemented on 292 children and 163 adult patients with developmental disabilities. Analysis of the parent-rated child's stress level on a typical day vs. the hospital visit showed no change or mild stress. Parents reported no stress exacerbation between a typical day and the day of hospital visit. Adult patients and their caregivers reported mild stress during the hospital visit. Anecdotal comments in the Press Ganey survey yielded positive feedback. Continuous evaluation and education are in progress to refine and expand the process on additional units.

Implications for advancing the practice for perianesthesia nursing: Multidisciplinary teams can work to screen and provide individualized care for patients with developmental disabilities which may aid in avoiding exacerbation of caregivers' and patients' stress levels during the preoperative phase.