The Adult Patient with Autism: Planning is the Key
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Autism is the world’s fastest growing developmental disability. This session will review the characteristics of autism and the unique challenges faced by these patients in the perioperative environment. It will identify ways to facilitate communication and foster the ability of the autistic patient and caregivers to navigate their way through surgery by developing an individualized plan for each patient, adapting the perioperative routine to meet the needs of the patient. A case study will be presented demonstrating the success that can be achieved when the intraprofessional team is educated about autism, works cohesively, includes the primary caregiver(s) in planning and formulates a plan for each step of the process. Autism is on the rise; it is important that we, as perianesthesia nurses, are educated and prepared to optimally meet the needs of this population.

Outline:

I. Autism
   a. Definitions
   b. Prevalence
   c. Trends
   d. Characteristics
   e. Considerations

II. Nursing Care
   a. Considerations for patients with autism.
   b. Successful tools/strategies.
   c. RN roles and responsibilities

III. Surgical Environment
   a. Obstacles for patients on the autistic spectrum
   b. Minimizing obstacles
   c. Calming measures

IV. Planning
   a. Communication with family/caregivers
   b. Questions to ask
   c. Considerations
   d. Interdisciplinary/interdepartmental collaboration
References


