HOW DO FAMILIES OF SURGICAL PATIENTS PERCEIVE COMMUNICATION OF THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS’ SURGICAL STATUS?

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Introduction: Communication between nurses and family members of surgical patients throughout the perioperative process impacts the patient and family experience.

Identification of problem: Effective communication can relieve anxiety and improve the overall patient/family experience and satisfaction. Data suggests that communication, especially from a nurse, is the factor most highly correlated with a positive healthcare experience.

Purpose of the study: The purpose of this study was to identify the effectiveness of the communication process with family members of surgical patients during the perioperative period.

Methodology: Cleveland Clinic IRB approval was received. On the day of surgery, patients and their families were provided with written handouts about the study. Random sampling of all surgical patients with family members present. The study excluded ophthalmology, pediatric, and intensive care patients. After obtaining informed consent, a researcher interviewed the family member in a private area following their post-operative visit with their family member. A Likert scale was used to measure satisfaction. Data regarding the patient’s length of stay was collected. To protect confidentiality, all documents were coded and securely maintained. Quantitative data was analyzed with descriptive statistics. Researchers identified and categorized the participants’ most common interview responses.

Results: Findings showed that 98% of the surveyed family members (n=43) felt well informed, perceiving communication as satisfactory. Mean satisfaction score regarding communication was 7.5 out of 10. Qualitative data also indicated overall satisfaction with communication.

Conclusion: Staff in the Perioperative Unit communicate with their patients’ family members frequently enough for them to feel well informed. Family members expressed satisfaction when utilizing the patient tracking board, waiting room pagers and communication from a staff member.

Discussion: The survey gave family members the opportunity to discuss other information and suggestions to improve the overall experience. The Department of Surgical Services current communication system proved to be effective for the majority of those surveyed. Researchers believe the process of interviewing itself increased satisfaction.

Implications for perianesthesia nurses and future research: Changes in practice included further education of staff on effective communication techniques, increasing the frequency of the information provided to family members by the primary caregiver, and changing visitation policy to encourage family visitation.