Ensuring Pediatric Competency for Adult PACU Nurses
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Introduction
- Nurses should have good assessment skills; however, post-anesthesia care unit (PACU) nurses must be particularly diligent in monitoring patients and quick to respond in potentially life-threatening situations.
- Pediatric and adult patients obviously have different needs when recovering from anesthesia and surgical procedures.

Problem Identification
- The clinical resource nurse (CRN) conducted a needs assessment to determine educational priorities.
- With increasing numbers of pediatric patients, additional knowledge and skills were deemed essential.

Methods
- Key imperative included pediatric advanced life support (PALS) certification.
- Logistics (e.g., fiscal needs; dedicated, protected time for class participation; staffing matrix so all nurses could pursue additional training) were discussed with the chief nursing officer.
- Program was modeled after the PALS curriculum and various educational pedagogies were incorporated:
  - Case studies
  - Clinical simulation
  - Team building exercises
- Novice and experienced nurses were paired together to hardwire the skill sets.

Outcomes
- Over a 14-month period, 30 registered nurses in the PACU became PALS certified
- Achieved 100% compliance for the unit.

Discussion
- Didactic and preceptor-supported education has resulted in:
  - Expressed perceptions of enhanced knowledge of pediatric care.
  - Nurses (e.g., clinicians and leaders) having a "voice" in patient safety strategies.
  - Cohesive practice across multiple generations.

Conclusions
- PACU nurses requested additional training to care for pediatric and neonatal patients.
- Nurse managers supported quick implementation of the training.
- Initiatives strengthened bonds between novice and experienced nurses.
- Enriched nurses' skill sets.
- Enhanced culture of child patient safety in the PACU setting.

Nursing Implications
- Model provides a roadmap for other peri-anesthesia nurses to evaluate, improve and influence the quality of care for pediatric patients.

References