

JOINING FORCES TO IMPROVE PATIENT SAFETY ASSOCIATED WITH OPIOID ADMINISTRATION IN THE PACU

Team Leaders: Cassie Merkle, MSN, RN, Administrative Nurse Manager,
Bone and Joint Surgical Services;
Paula Kobelt, MSN, RN-BC, Clinical Outcomes Manager;
Paula Renker, PhD, RN, Senior Research Nurse
Grant Medical Center, Columbus, Ohio

Post-Anesthesia Care Unit (PACU) nurses in our main hospital PACU identified concerns after several adverse drug events occurred associated with opioid administration for pain management. Despite aggressive administration of opioid medications to treat acute post-operative pain, a standardized method of assessing sedation was not used. After consultation with the pain management team, the Pasero Opioid- Induced Sedation Scale currently being used in the medical-surgical units was selected for use in the main PACU. The new protocol was shared with the nurse administrator of the hospital's orthopedic PACU who indicated interest in adopting the protocol in their unit. Together, the administrators developed a plan to implement and support the new patient safety initiative.

In order to successfully implement the POSS protocol for care and monitoring of PACU patients, nursing policies and documentation forms required revision. This eight month process included input from PACU shared governance members and other staff nurses, approvals from appropriate hospital and system committees. Detailed educational programs and aides were developed and implemented in both PACUs.

Post-implementation chart reviews indicated that the POSS scale was being successfully and consistently utilized with opioid administration. Anecdotal comments by the nurses support their positive regard for the utility of the scale in helping them to provide commendable and safe patient care.

Adoption of a standardized sedation assessment for medication administration is critical not only to provide patient safety, but also to address national guidelines and Joint Commission recommendations for patient care.