

A QUIET ENVIRONMENT IS A HEALING ENVIRONMENT

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The challenge faced in every hospital is how to promote and maintain a quiet, restful environment for our patients. Noise disrupts communication, thought processes, sleep, and decreases patient satisfaction. Patients recovering in PACU have expressed dissatisfaction with increased noise levels and overhearing staff members' conversations (the most common cause of noise disruption). The stress of noise may be associated with decreased immune function, impaired wound healing, and reduced pain tolerance.

OBJECTIVES OF PROJECT:

The goals were to identify noise sources and reduce sound levels, decrease noise distractions, make verbal communication more effective, potentially decrease the risk of errors, and enhance patient experience.

PROCESS OF IMPLEMENTATION:

Five volunteer nursing staff members, led by the nurse manager, formed a committee with the objective of finding ways to reduce noise in PACU.

The committee researched the impact of noise on patients and staff. Decibel readings were recorded in PACU over two weeks. The unit purchased the "Yacker Tracker," to give a visual reminder when noise gets too loud. The committee members gave educational presentations at staff meetings and asked staff to come up with ideas to reduce noise.

STATEMENT OF SUCCESSFUL PRACTICE:

"Yacker Tracker" alarms decreased in all PACU areas by the third week. The "Yacker Tracker" serves as a constant reminder that noise reduction is important, and that conversations can be louder than people realize. To further decrease noise levels, the volume of the overhead paging system, desk phone ringers, and monitor alarms were lowered in all PACU areas. Noise levels measured after two months show a decrease of about 5-10 decibels.

IMPLICATIONS FOR ADVANCING THE PRACTICE OF PERIANESTHESIA NURSING:

A quiet environment will promote the health and well-being of both patients and staff. Reducing unnecessary noise can improve the patient's perception of the healing environment, improve satisfaction scores, and enhance recovery. For hospital staff, excessive noise contributes to fatigue, emotional exhaustion, and burnout as well as increased work pressure, stress and annoyance. Noise is a distraction that interrupts patient care and potentially increases the risk of medical error. Finally, controlling sound can lead to better health outcomes.