

SURVEILLANCE OF SKIN INTEGRITY IN THE PERIOPERATIVE SETTING

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The perioperative team at a National Cancer Institute designated cancer center identified an increase in patient safety reports related to undocumented assessments of skin breakdown. Identifying pre-existing skin alterations reduces patients' risk of complications and length of stay and improves cost effectiveness and patient outcomes. An education-based intervention was developed to improve initial identification and documentation of alterations in skin integrity in the perioperative setting.

OBJECTIVES OF PROJECT:

The objectives for this process improvement project were to identify barriers of assessment and documentation of skin impairment in the perioperative setting; to increase skin impairment surveillance, assessment and documentation; and to decrease patient safety reports related to undocumented assessments of skin breakdown.

IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS:

Key barriers to assessment and documentation were obtained through a baseline survey of perioperative nurses. One identified barrier was the need to increase collaboration between the pre- and post-operative nursing teams to begin skin integrity assessment pre-operatively and to improve post-operative follow-up on identified issues. To address these issues the Skin Integrity Team collaborated with wound, ostomy and continence nurses to provide education on proper assessment, documentation and interventions; implemented a standardized process for assessment and documentation of skin integrity; developed electronic documentation tools to include skin assessment in the pre- and post-operative periods; and identified and trained skin champions to audit skin assessment documentation and interventions to assure sustainability of the new practice change.

SUCCESSFUL PRACTICE:

The primary outcome measure was the number of patient safety reports related to undocumented assessments of skin breakdown. Data collected demonstrated 3-4 reports entered monthly at baseline with gradually decreases in reports in the three month post-implementation period and no reports in the past 30 days.

IMPLICATIONS FOR ADVANCING PRACTICE:

Providing resources including education, auditing and integration of electronic medical record technologies can enhance the consistency with which skin integrity assessments are performed and documented. Ultimately, improved assessment and documentation may contribute to better outcomes for patients in terms of protecting skin integrity, decreasing length of stay related to compromised skin integrity, and potentially reducing cost of care.