

## **COMMUNICATION ACROSS THE SURGICAL CARE CONTINUUM**

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### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

Handoff communication is an essential component of safety as patients travel through the continuum of surgical care. The nurse-to-nurse handoff within this continuum was noted to be vague and incomplete, which affected the quality of subsequent handoffs through multiple transfers of care. Families also commented about insufficient communication during their experiences in follow-up phone calls. The original handoff tool was not well utilized and was deemed not helpful by perioperative nursing staff because it did not focus on the needs of the pediatric surgical patient.

### **OBJECTIVES OF PROJECT:**

The goal of our project was to develop an evidence-based, standardized handoff tool for Surgical Services staff. Utilizing the Shared Governance model, members of the Partnership Councils in the three surgical areas met to determine the most meaningful information to be included in a perioperative handoff. Members of the councils reviewed the literature and developed consensus for the appropriate elements of the handoff.

### **PROCESS OF IMPLEMENTATION:**

The communication plan for implementation of the handoff tool included face-to-face conversations, email notifications, and informational posters in communal areas. The Leadership teams and Partnership Council members set the practice expectation that the tool would be utilized at every phase of care. Observation audits were completed in conjunction with soliciting staff feedback for refinement of the tool.

### **STATEMENT OF SUCCESSFUL PRACTICE:**

The frequency of handoffs increased as well as utilization of the standardized tool, especially with the pre-op to OR handoff. The PACU staff received positive feedback from inpatient unit staff regarding the quality of their handoffs and the OR staff noted the thoroughness of the tool when transferring patients to the ICU. Fewer parent concerns were noted related to a loss of pertinent patient information.

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR ADVANCING THE PRACTICE OF PERIANESTHESIA NURSING:**

Nurses were empowered to collaborate between the different areas of Surgical Services to improve the handoff process and patient outcomes. The standardized handoff tool for surgical patients is one step forward in providing safe, individualized care to our patients and families. Future work may include promoting the use of the tool with interventional radiology and at a remote ambulatory surgery center.