

## **PERIOPERATIVE CROSS-TRAINING: IMPROVING PATIENT CARE FLOW AND SATISFACTION**

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**Background Information:** University of North Carolina Medical Center is a Level One Trauma Center which performs over 21000+ inpatient and ambulatory surgeries yearly. Patient throughput can become stagnant at varying times of the day due to the high volume of admissions, outpatients, and recovering inpatients returning to their unit. The extended wait time for same day admissions as well as staff scheduling has added increase stress on our patient flow through the perioperative suites. The need to facilitate patient throughput and prevent operating room(OR) holds prompted cross-training of staff in the Pre-Op and Post Anesthesia Care Units (PACU) to recover patients from the Operating Room.

**Objectives of Project:** The purpose of cross-training the nursing staff was to develop a comprehensive nursing team which promotes perioperative throughput. Cross-training the nursing staff facilitates primary nursing care by enabling ambulatory surgical patients to be recovered and discharged by the same staff member. Family visitation and communication is enhanced by recovering ambulatory patients within the Pre-operative suite. Additionally creating a separate area for boarding patients awaiting their room assignment has allowed facilitation and organization of throughput and decompression of the PACU.

**Process of Implementation:** The Children's Pre-Op/PACU successfully had piloted and implemented cross training in 2003. The leadership team acknowledged cross training as a solid solution to facilitate patient throughput. A comprehensive cross training orientation guide was established for the Adult Pre-Op/PACU. Notably it was decided any new employee joining the Pre-Op/PACU in either Children's or Adults would receive the same orientation and cross training. An orientation packet was designed including skill competency checklists, EPIC documentation guides, and related evidence based journal articles. The adult cross training was scheduled to begin in May, 2014 for 4 months and the completion of orientation for all staff extended for a year due to staffing, medical leave, staff transfers, and the acquisition of new employees.

Phase I implementation of employee cross-training began with the orientation of 15 pre-operative (PRE) nurses to the PACU. The length and degree of orientation to the recovery room was individualized based upon the nurses past experiences, skills, and comfort level. The initial orientation was scheduled for 2 weeks, realizing the staff had been caring for Monitored Anesthesia Care patients and Phase II recovery.

Phase II of cross-training involved the orientation of 14 PACU nurses to PRE-OP. The orientation to PRE-OP was scheduled for 3 days to 1 week depending upon the individuals learning needs.

Phase III began in August of 2015 with the hiring of new employees. Employees are now hired to work in both phases of patient care. Orientation is re-structured to follow the patient through preadmission testing to preoperative preparation, the operating room, recovery, and discharge.

Leadership began multidisciplinary huddles to review the current and next day schedule, bed allocation, and staffing distribution. The nurse leaders and charge nurses review the patient care flow continually throughout the day to make necessary adjustments to the allocation of staff and patients within the unit.

**Statement of Successful Practice:** Cross-training has created a comprehensive nursing team which allows for the efficient distribution of staffing facilitating patient care and flow through the perioperative services.

The number of OR holds has decreased significantly from 44 in May of 2015 to 4 delays in October of 2015. Outpatients are no longer held in the recovery room once meeting discharge charge criteria.

As a result of cross training patients are reunited with their family members within thirty minutes of recovery time and prepared for discharge by a primary nurse. There has been another added benefit of being able to have the pre-op nurses comfortable in assuming care of patients waiting on room assignments.

**Implications for Advancing the Practice of Perianesthesia Nursing:** The development of a comprehensive nursing staff facilitates patient care delivery, enhances the nurse/patient relationship, and has provided a mechanism for decompression of the perioperative suites.