

EARLY RECOVERY PROTOCOL: STRATEGY TO DECREASE PATIENT LENGTH OF STAY

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Background Information: There is a considerable interest in developing an early recovery and discharge protocols for patients undergoing total joint replacement. Studies have suggested that early and rapid commencement of physical therapy as early as PACU leads to quicker attainment of functional milestones, decrease length of hospital stay, fewer post-operative complications and decreased overall cost. Early recovery programs are a multidisciplinary endeavor, requiring close coordination between surgeons, anesthesiologists, physical therapists, and nursing staff. Anesthetic management plays a vital role in ensuring the success of an early recovery protocol.

Objectives of Project: The objectives are to evaluate if hypobaric spinal anesthesia leads to early discharge and attainment of functional milestones and to establish an early recovery protocol as a strategy to decrease post anesthesia care unit (PACU) length of stay (LOS) and overall hospital LOS.

Process of Implementation: Utilizing the PDSA model, pre-operative, intraoperative and PACU teams were formed with multidisciplinary representation of anesthesiologist, surgeons, physical therapy and case management for home health support. We established a comprehensive early recovery protocol for patients who received hypobaric spinal anesthesia. Education training and in-service on the patient selection, inclusion/exclusion criteria and process workflow were conducted. Our team addressed barriers, waste and challenges to new standardized protocol, perioperative workflow and bed constraints in the inpatient area.

Statement of Successful Practice: A pilot program focused on total joint replacement was started on February, 2015. After implementation, all metrics showed an improvement in PACU LOS and overall hospital LOS. 20% of the hypobaric patients were discharged the same day of surgery. As we sustain our improvements, future project will focus on readmission rates, pain scores post discharge home.

Implications for Advancing the Practice of Perianesthesia Nursing: This quality improvement project improved our PACU throughput and utilization. Overall, it improves patient satisfaction for patients who wants to go home early. The early recovery protocol enhances standardization and teamwork between all disciples involved in the care of the orthopedic surgical patient.