

# **IMPLEMENTATION OF A LEARNER-CENTERED EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM FOR DEVELOPING HANDS-ON CRITICAL CARE KNOWLEDGE AND CLINICAL JUDGMENT SKILLS FOR THE PACU NURSE**

Team Leader: Melanie Harvey BS RN CCRN  
St. Joseph's Hospital Health Center, Syracuse, New York

**Overview:** Healthcare technology is ever changing to meet the patient healthcare demands. Nurses are forced to advance their skills to meet the high demands of patient care. Patient acuity increases with multiple comorbidities, increasing the demand for intensive care unit (ICU) beds, resulting in utilizing the post-anesthesia care unit (PACU) as an overflow area. PACU nurses may not have previous critical care experience; therefore, it is important to equip nurses with the proper education to gain critical care and critical thinking skills.

**Purpose:** In the PACU setting, does the implementation of an evidence-based innovative and learner-centered educational program for developing hands-on critical care knowledge and clinical judgment skills of the PACU nurse result in a reduction of poor patient outcomes as compared to the current orientation and training program for the PACU nurse? The objective of this evidence-based practice (EBP) change is to improve the quality of care and safety for PACU patients by transforming the orientation process of newly hired nurses without critical care experience. This program will prepare nurses to prioritize care for all Phase I PACU patients by providing an educational series to expand critical care knowledge and help nurses utilize knowledge and evidence that will prevent poor patient outcomes or adverse events in the critical care population

**Methods/Evidence:** Literature was synthesized, the data collected was positive and supported the EBP change for implementing the use of simulation as a tool to promote critical thinking. The evidence gathered through the literature review primarily consists of qualitative and quantitative data with the exception of two randomized, controlled trials. This evidence strengthens the proposed change as critical thinking is measured and translated into both qualitative and quantitative data.

**Significance of Findings/ Outcomes:** In reviewing literature, the importance of utilizing different teaching methods that consist of innovative hands-on learning showed beneficial outcomes for clinical nurses as well as the new graduate nurse. Research supports the proposal for enhancing individual nurses' technical skills in critical care nursing, but also to improve non-technical skills. This can be accomplished in a safe learning environment utilizing simulation where nurses can practice skills without risk of patient harm. Innovative teaching methods are becoming more prevalent in healthcare professions to develop different ways of thinking. Literature supports the idea of incorporating problem-based teaching methods, simulation experiences, and routine competencies, PACU nurses will gain the knowledge and hands-on critical thinking skills needed to care safely for all patients within PACU, with confidence.

**Implications for Advancing the Practice of Perianesthesia Nursing:** The EBP proposal will challenge nurses to think critically, build on previous knowledge, and gain experiences to prepare the nurse to care for critical patients who enter PACU. It is important for nurses to be

well prepared to detect changes before adverse events occur and prepare staff to care for these complex patients. Changing the way nurses orient