The Pathway to Excellence: Overcoming Challenges to Achieve Recognition

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Background Information: National excellence awards are a validation for exceeding standards in patient safety, quality care, healthy work environments and a skilled nursing workforce. The Beacon Award for Excellence™ provides unit-base recognition and achieving this validation authenticates an individual unit's efforts to improve care for patients and families. Currently only twelve recovery units in the nation have received the Beacon Award for Excellence™.

Objectives of Project: Demonstrate Post-Anesthesia Care Unit (PACU) nurses' contribution to safe patient care, evidenced-based care, competency development and a healthy work environment.

Process of Implementation: Striving for an excellence award started with seeking the CORE Award from AORN. Since the expectation for this PACU is for each nurse to function in a critical care role utilizing their critical care experience, efforts were redirected to the Beacon Award when the CORE award had been discontinued.

The first four categories of the award application were uncomplicated and applicable to this unit. The fifth category required nurse sensitive data which was not formally collected in this department. This lack of data created challenges in proceeding with the application. Determining relevant data indicators for the perianesthesia nurse required innovative design. After extensive collaboration with unit leadership and the perioperative quality and safety department, a dashboard was created to collect nurse sensitive indicator data applicable to the perianesthesia profession. During this process, the team recognized national benchmarking as a contributing factor to improving patient outcomes. Once appropriate data was compiled, the application was submitted, and indicators were chosen to submit for national reporting.

Statement of Successful Practice: The application was submitted in August 2023. The units were awarded a Silver Beacon Award for Excellence™ from the American-Association of Critical Care Nurses.

Implications for Advancing the Practice of Perianesthesia Nursing: This unit's effort to obtain an excellence award boosts morale, fosters better patient outcomes and healthier work environments. Learning how one unit overcame challenges to apply perioperative nurse indicators to a critical care nurse excellence award can spur other PACUs to pursue awards for their units. Submitting outcome data for national benchmarking recognizes unit achievements and opportunities for growth, advancing the practice of perianesthesia nursing and acknowledging the importance of the profession to patient outcomes.