

## **The Clinical Support Nurse: Responding to the Experience-Complexity Gap in a High Acuity Post Anesthesia Care Unit**

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**Abstract Background Information:** Numerous patient safety concerns were brought to PACU leadership regarding the lack of experience of new hire RNs, the increasing complexity of the patient population, and preceptor burnout and disengagement. In addition, the scope of the Clinical Nurse Educator role does not allow them to be on the unit daily to provide nursing support and real time education. A diverse team of PACU RNs joined together to collaborate and brainstorm ways to better support inexperienced RNs, orientees and preceptors, and improve patient safety concerns.

**Objectives of Project:** The objectives of the Clinical Support RN (CSRN) role are to ensure the provision of safe care in a busy, high acuity PACU, ease the transition from novice to competent PACU nurse, increase preceptor support, and to identify and address real time education needs on the unit.

CSRN Role Summary Includes:

- Support orientees and preceptors on the unit
- Provide 1:1 real time clinical education, with a focus on RNs with less than 1-year PACU experience
- Identify safety concerns and education needs
- Deliver learning activities in collaboration with educator and leadership

### **Process of Implementation:**

- Literature review completed to explore experience-complexity gap
- Role and responsibilities of the CSRN developed
- Piloted with one CSRN who provided coverage 2 days a week
- Second CSRN hired after successful pilot to provide more coverage
- The team further defined the role and implemented a process to track utilization and evaluate staff perception of the role

**Statement of Successful Practice:** 78% of the total events logged by the CSRN over a 3-month period provided support to either orientees/preceptors or PACU RNs with less than 1 year of experience. 92% of RNs either strongly agreed or agreed they feel more supported when the CSRN is on the unit. 92% of RNs also either strongly agreed or agreed the CSRN role has improved safety on the unit.

**Implications for Advancing the Practice of Perianesthesia Nursing:** The gap between nursing experience and patient complexity is expected to continue to grow. Finding solutions to mitigate this experience-complexity gap that are tailored to meet the unique needs of the perianesthesia setting are crucial for quality and safety outcomes, as well as RN satisfaction and retention.