Minimizing Patient Transfers in Perianesthesia: Improving Safety and Operational Efficiency

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Abstract Background Information: The PACU nursing team identified inefficiencies in the patient throughput process. Initially, the operating room (OR) teams placed patients on stretchers for transfer to PACU, which required additional transfer to hospital beds. This multi-step process prolonged patient transfers to the inpatient floors, increased the risk of injury to staff and patients, and contributed to excessive linen use.

Objectives of Project: This project aims to assess efficiencies in current PACU throughput by evaluating key metrics: transfer durations to the floor, linen usage, and staff safety. Those measures are compared against those of patients placed directly on hospital beds in the OR.

Process of Implementation: The PACU and OR teams collaborated to identify key patient populations, specifically those with movement restrictions or extended bed rest needs, who would benefit from hospital beds. This interdisciplinary approach aimed to optimize the patient transfer process and mitigate associated risks. This project targeted operational efficiency and safety metrics. Data were collected from 20 patients pre-implementation and 21 patients post-implementation.

Statement of Successful Practice: Directly placing patients on hospital beds in the ORs improved PACU throughput. The average transfer time from PACU to the floor decreased from 21 minutes and 32 seconds to 10 minutes and 30 seconds, a 48.76% reduction. Linen usage decreased from 15.94 lbs to 8.94 lbs per patient, a 56% reduction, promoting sustainability. Additionally, staff safety improved with fewer repetitive lifting exposures, especially since 39% of patients were overweight or obese (BMI>25), and floor staff assisted with lifts only 41% of the time.

Implications for Advancing the Practice of Perianesthesia Nursing: These findings highlight optimizing patient transfer processes to improve safety and efficiency. Directly placing patients on OR hospital beds reduces the risk of injury for staff and patients, fostering a safer clinical environment. This project underscores the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration and decision-making in enhancing operations and resource management. By continually refining processes, perianesthesia nursing can establish best practices that improve patient experiences and support institutional goals for safety, efficiency, and sustainability.