

Perianesthesia Health Literacy Training

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Abstract Background Information: Healthy People 2030 has included “attaining health literacy to improve the health and well-being of all” as one of its five overarching goals. They define health literacy as, “the degree to which individuals have the ability to find, understand, and use information and services to inform health-related decisions and actions for themselves and others” (healthy people 2030). Only 12% of literate Americans are proficient in health literacy. This alarming statistic underscores the potential impact of poor health literacy on patient outcomes. Decreased health literacy can lead to serious consequences, including increased hospitalizations, longer stays, difficulty managing chronic conditions, medication errors, emergency room utilization, and increased mortality. These outcomes underscore the severity of the issue and the urgent need for action.

Objectives of Project: The purpose of this practice improvement project was to educate the perianesthesia staff on 1) the definition of health literacy and its importance to patient outcomes, 2) the definition and use of plain language in the perianesthesia setting, and 3) to complete hands-on practice utilizing teach-back with department-specific scenarios.

Process of Implementation: A two-hour train-the-trainer course was conducted for 15 health literacy champions among preoperative, postoperative, and endoscopy nurses. These champions conducted several 30-minute classes on health literacy competency for 38 of their PCT, RN, and Endo Tech peers. The 30-minute training sessions included a definition of health literacy and provided the “why” behind the education. Participants created a list of words used in their daily practice (hypertension, emesis, edema, etc.) and practiced replacing medical terms with plain language (high blood pressure, vomit, swelling). Staff also practiced using teach-back with real-life scenarios.

Statement of Successful Practice: Of the 38 staff who participated in the health literacy training, 20 (53%) completed voluntary pre and post surveys. A positive increase between the pre and post survey answers was identified. When asked, “how useful was this education today related to Health Literacy?” 35% said extremely useful, 55% said very useful, and 10% said somewhat useful.

Implications for Advancing the Practice of Perianesthesia Nursing: To be a nurse is to be an educator. Health literacy training gives bedside educators a set of simple evidence-based tools that have the potential to positively impact patient outcomes.