

Perioperative Nurse Navigator Pilot: Having a Nurse Navigator at a Safety Net Hospital to Reduce Same-day Surgery Cancellations and Improve Patient Outcomes and Experience

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Abstract Background Information: As a Perioperative leadership team at a safety-net hospital, we noticed a high same day surgery cancellation rate, especially in our outpatient surgical center. With our underserved and at-risk population, we saw a potential for implementing a nurse navigator to assist our patients get the necessary care they need while overcoming barriers that may lead to unnecessary cancellations.

Objectives of Project: Our objective is to decrease the number of same-day surgery cancellations and improve patient experience. We want to demonstrate that having a registered nurse in this role would be imperative, especially as a high number of cancellations are due to patients taking/not taking specific medications, and not fully understanding NPO guidelines.

Process of Implementation: We had a volunteer staff nurse step into the role of nurse navigator for our ongoing pilot in which we have focused on two services who had the highest cancellation rates. We created a referral form with criteria that could be used by the clinic physicians to suggest patients the navigator could assist. Using referrals, and a predictive analytics tool built to identify those patients at a high risk for cancellation, the navigator reviewed charts and initiated contact with these patients. The navigator has assisted patients with transportation, medication questions, guardianship, medical power of attorney concerns, and navigating what we call the “Road to Surgery”.

Statement of Successful Practice: This is still new to us, but when looking at our data we are seeing a decrease in same day surgery cancellations among the two targeted specialties. We have also had positive feedback that the nurse navigator has been helpful in making patients feel more comfortable and prepared for their surgery.

Implications for Advancing the Practice of Perianesthesia Nursing: We believe that having a perioperative nurse navigator is a valuable tool for safety-net hospitals with patient populations who would benefit from extra guidance. Having this role be clinical has shown to be imperative for patients with limited medical literacy and lack of support systems. Nurse Navigators are utilized in many ways in healthcare, and there is a significant opportunity to improve patient outcomes if used in the perioperative setting.