Promoting Post Anesthesia Care Unit (PACU) Efficiency for Local and Monitored Anesthesia Care (MAC) Cases

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Abstract Background Information: The post-operative care in any healthcare facility is complex and requires ongoing review and change in practice to improve operational efficiency and patient outcomes. Recent assessment identified an opportunity to standardize documentation of PACU discharge delays, patient event times, and Aldrete scores. In collaboration with the PACU Director of Anesthesiology, PACU Nurse Manager, and PACU charge nurses, recommendations and feedback were reviewed to identify opportunities and develop action plans.

Objectives of Project: To standardize discharge protocols to enhance operational efficiency and patient experience.

Process of Implementation: PACU charge nurses reviewed the unit's current practices and developed standard discharge goals and documentation protocols. Thorough chart audits were conducted and identified primary areas of need in documentation of delays, events and Aldrete scores. The team worked with anesthesiology to establish length of stay goals of 30-60 minutes for local cases and 60-90 minutes for Monitored Anesthesia Care (MAC) cases. Staff were educated on recommended discharge times for both local and MAC cases. Education also included delays and events documentation, Aldrete scores, as well as escalation of nursing actions to help improve the discharge process.

Statement of Successful Practice: Increased awareness of length of stay goals and enhanced discharge protocols to meet the needs of the patient population resulted in decreased length of stay, improved throughput, and overall patient experience. Post-implementation data showed a 31% reduction in discharge delays for local and MAC cases in the PACU. In addition, there was also a marked improvement on discharge delays documentation of 47% from baseline.

Implications for Advancing the Practice of Perianesthesia Nursing: Utilizing the standardized process and documentation in PACU can significantly improve the unit workflow, efficiency, and patient care throughput. This project demonstrates how the recommended length of stay goals for both local and MAC cases, accurate patient event times and delays documentation can enhance efficiency in the overall patient care and discharge process.