

Preparedness in Perioperative Departments: Strategies for Effective Disaster Response

Kayleigh Emmons, BSN, RN, CAPA; Meghan McFarland, MSN, RN
UCHealth University of Colorado Hospital, Aurora, Colorado



About University of Colorado Hospital

- Flagship Hospital with 894 licensed beds and 110 ambulatory clinics
- #1 US News and World Report in Colorado 11 years in a row
- Six-time Magnet Designated Hospital
- American College of Surgeons Level 1 Trauma Center with 41 Operating Rooms (34,671 surgeries performed in 2024)
- 1 of 63 American Burn Association (ABA) verified locations in the United States and the first ABA-verified burn center in Colorado



Background

The perioperative department, with over 600 staff, is a critical component of the hospital, serving as the hub for surgical procedures and patient care that directly impacts multiple areas of the hospital. However, during disaster events, this department can often be overlooked when determining patient flow and processes. By employing a systems-level approach, we developed job action sheets that clearly outline the perioperative departments’ roles and responsibilities in disaster scenarios, ensuring effective coordination and communication across all departments. This proactive planning helps mitigate risks and enhances overall hospital resilience during emergencies.

Objectives

The project aims to outline the roles and responsibilities for all staff by interlinking a series of job action sheets to streamline the communication process throughout the perioperative departments ensuring successful treatment and transition of patients in a disaster event. Empowering staff at all levels with specific job functions allows for increased collaboration and gives direction during highly stressful situations.

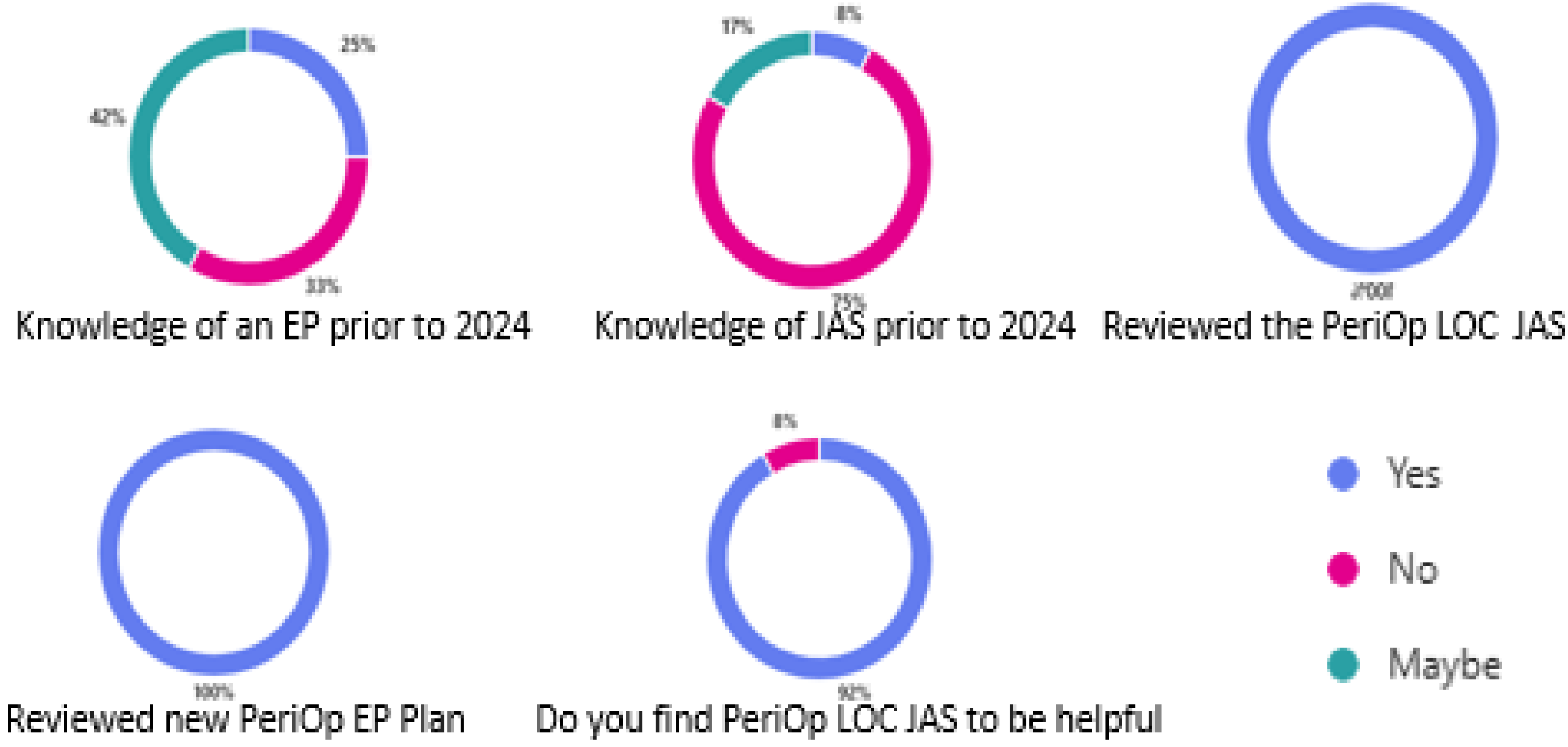
Process of Implementation

The process for implementation included all perioperative departments creating job action sheets, which are broken down into four sections: assess, prepare, respond, and maintain. Each section then has designated tasks. All perioperative leaders met to collaborate and discuss the implications of a disaster and how this affects each unit, as well as the trickle-down effect that occurs between departments. A job action sheet was also created for the perioperative manager on-call in order to provide clear direction for their role during a disaster. A disaster drill was held, and the job action sheets were implemented. After the exercise event, a debrief meeting was held to discuss suggested changes to these sheets to better match workflows. A Microsoft Teams page was created to include all perioperative leaders, charge nurses, and supervisors throughout the departments. This Teams channel has designated folders for each department with their respective disaster plans, as well as the job action sheet for the perioperative leader on-call. We also created a ‘live’ disaster worksheet that is on this Teams page. During a true disaster, the charge nurses/supervisors can fill out this spreadsheet with available staff, open bays, resources needed, ORs running, etc. We also created a condensed version of this worksheet to be used during patient flow incidents, such as code yellows (any incident where hospital incident command would be stood up), EPIC downtime, or high capacity alerts. This sheet focuses on how many patients require bed assignments post-operatively and any other needs the units may have that are not mass casualty related.

Disaster Planning Worksheet																	
This Worksheet is to assist in the organization of available bays, available staff and bays and staff being utilized for Emergency patients in PeriOp. This worksheet is to be updated as instructed by the MOC.																	
Date																	
Incident																	
Incident Start																	
MOC																	
PreOp						OR						SPD					
Time	# Staff Available (Split RN/Supp or Staff)	Total # Bays Available	# of Pts Currently in PreOp MedSurg bed post-op	# of Pts Currently in PreOp ICU bed post-op	Comments/Needs	Time	# Staff Available	#OR Running	# OR Available	Care/Room/SPD Need	Perfusion Y/N	Comments	Time	# Staff Available	Emergency Case Cart Checked Y/N	# Sets in Decon	# Sets Available /Type (Vascular /Thoracic /OrthoTrauma/Burn)
																	Comments/Needs

Statement of Successful Practice

This new structure can be implemented in situations of mass casualty, evacuation, or internal systems malfunctions (EPIC downtime, high hospital capacity, code yellows). The perioperative department has had several practice drills and non-mass casualty related incidents where these job action sheets and live worksheets were implemented across all departments. Charge nurses and staff have stated that they feel more prepared if a disaster were to occur through the use of the job action sheets and have confidence in their role during these situations. Our perioperative leaders have also expressed confidence in knowing exactly what to do and what the expectations are from them during these incidents if they are the leader on-call. The next steps are to expand this process into other procedural areas in the hospital and maintain quarterly meeting to review resources.



Implications for Advancing the Practice of Perianesthesia Nursing

Providing perioperative staff and leaders with a job action sheet will provide direction, clarity, collaboration, improve patient flow, expedite patients to the OR, and ensure patient safety during a disaster event.

