

Spine Time

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BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

At a large academic medical center, evidence-based practice guides patient care. Over time, the protocol for transferring Adolescent Idiopathic Scoliosis Repair/Posterior Spinal Instrumentation and Fusion (AIS/PSIF) patients to a specialized care unit became outdated, resulting in unnecessarily long stays in the Post Anesthesia Care Unit (PACU). This negatively impacted patient flow and experience. To address this issue, a new protocol was evaluated to reduce PACU length of stay (LOS) from 4 hours to 2 hours, based on current best practices and research supporting a shorter recovery period without compromising patient safety. This change aimed to improve operational efficiency, patient flow, and satisfaction by ensuring timely access to recovery beds.

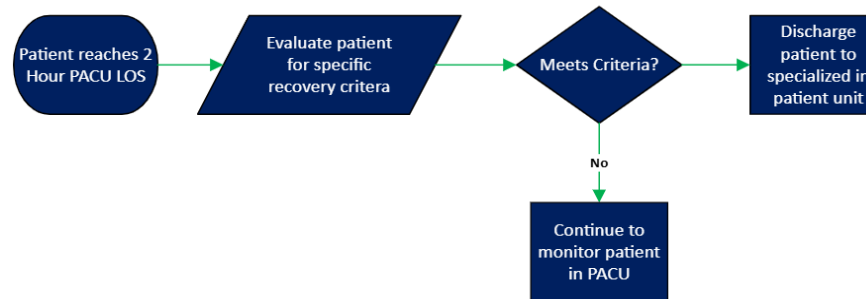
METHODOLOGY

A multidisciplinary team comprising surgeons, anesthesiologists, advanced practice providers, and nurses reviewed the AIS/PSIF care protocol and conducted a comprehensive literature review to identify the latest evidence on managing these complex patients. The review found no evidence linking PACU LOS with patient outcomes.



IMPLEMENTATION

A revised protocol was implemented to address PACU LOS and improve patient outcomes by focusing on effective pain management, hemodynamic stability, control of post-operative nausea and vomiting (PONV), and streamlined care in a designated specialized inpatient unit. The protocol established a minimum PACU stay of two hours with immediate application of cryotherapy. At the two-hour mark, patients meeting specific PACU discharge criteria could be transferred to the specialized inpatient unit.



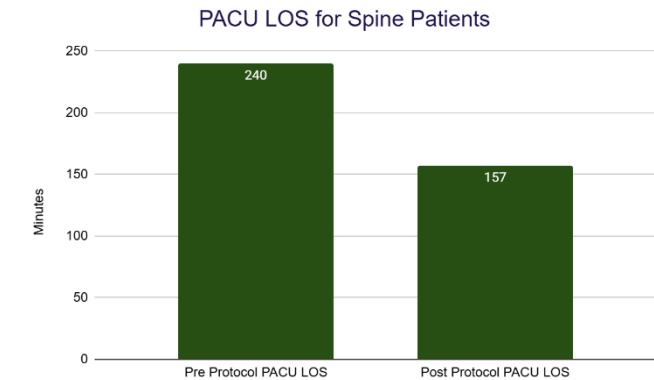
Providers and the PACU nursing team were educated on the updated protocol during in-service sessions led by the PACU Nurse Champion via a PowerPoint presentation, with understanding assessed through post-tests.

Updated AIS/PSIF Protocol

- **PACU LOS:** Minimum of two hours.
- **Cryotherapy:** Immediate application upon arrival.
- **Transfer Criteria:** Transfer to specialized inpatient unit if PACU discharge criteria met at two hours.

RESULTS

The new AIS/PSIF protocol reduced the minimum stay requirement from four hours to two hours in the PACU which improved throughput and patient satisfaction while maintaining safety and efficiency. In the three months following implementation, PACU LOS for these patients decreased by 33%, an average of 53 minutes.



DISCUSSION & IMPLICATIONS

Implementing standardized protocols improves patient care, patient experience, reduces costs through shorter PACU LOS, and increases patient throughput, allowing more patients to be transferred to a specialized unit in a shorter timeframe. The team will monitor the progress to determine if this change in protocol continues to meet patient needs.

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REFERENCES

