

## **Opening a Dedicated Cardiac Post Anesthesia Care Unit for Congenital Heart Patients**

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**Abstract Background Information:** An existing Cardiac Prep & Recovery unit had the opportunity to expand our space to create a designated Cardiac PACU for congenital heart patients. This would allow us to separate the Phase 1 patients from the patients in Prep and Recovery in order to create a more formal anesthesia recovery process.

**Objectives of Project:** Our objectives in creating a Cardiac PACU were to ensure safe phase 1 recovery for congenital heart patients in accordance with standard practices and policies. An integral part of that was to educate staff adequately on new workflows and procedures, new expectations and communication processes, and new space and supplies.

**Process of Implementation:** Creating and implementing a Cardiac PACU took extensive research and collaboration with many other departments. We had to make decisions around patient inclusion and exclusion criteria and create many new workflows. After developing our patient inclusion and exclusion criteria, we educated staff on the differences in recovering patients coming from CVOR vs Cath Lab vs Radiology and recovering patients going to the Cardiac ICU vs Cardiac Acute Care Unit.

The new workflows and processes developed included staffing changes, a new Epic build, designing an airway cart, an emergency medication box, and bedside carts, Malignant Hyperthermia management, head-of-bed setup, PACU discharge criteria, arterial line management, and vasoactive drip management.

**Statement of Successful Practice:** Since opening in September 2024, the Cardiac PACU has successfully cared for over one thousand pediatric patients undergoing phase one recovery from cardiac anesthesia. Additionally, the unit had a successful first accreditation visit from JCAHO. Providers have also reported satisfaction with the new space and workflows, and our nursing staff continues to develop its knowledge and practice of safe peri-anesthetic nursing.

**Implications for Advancing the Practice of Perianesthesia Nursing:** Nursing care in general is more complex than ever, and even more so in complicated patients like the congenital heart population. As our patients live longer, they will continue to require procedures throughout their lifespan. The anatomical and physiological differences in these patient is pronounced, especially when undergoing anesthesia. Our patients require, and deserve, specialized perianesthesia nursing care, which our Cardiac PACU is proud to deliver.