

A Comfort-Centered Approach: Advancing Pediatric and Family Experience Through the Age-Appropriate Inventory in the PACU

Team Leader: Colleen Ward BSN RN CPAN

Team Members: Katherine Babcock MPA BSN RN CPAN,
Allison Pzena, Child Life Specialist III

New York Presbyterian Weill Cornell Medical Center, New York, NY

Abstract Background Information: Providing postoperative care for pediatric patients requires a recovery unit specifically equipped to address the distinct needs of this population.

Reducing pediatric inventory supplies in predominantly adult PACU populations is a recognized issue that can compromise timely, safe, and developmentally appropriate care.

At our institution, PACU RNs faced a shortage of age-appropriate supplies, such as medication formulations, pain relief options, fall prevention tools, toileting supplies, and distraction or coping items. RNs had to communicate with other units to acquire these supplies, which caused delays or less-than-ideal care for pediatric patients.

Objectives of Project: Ensure pediatric patients and families in the PACU receive timely, comforting, and developmentally appropriate care by improving access to age-appropriate supplies.

Process of Implementation: A multidisciplinary team was established between PACU leadership, Child Life Specialists, Supply Chain management, Food and Nutrition, Patient Navigators (PNs), and Business Assistants (BAs) to address gaps in pediatric care resources. The team identified and prioritized age-appropriate supplies to enhance comfort, safety, and developmental support. Pediatric-focused items, including non-slip socks, diapers, pediatric gowns, pain relief items, and Pedialyte ice pops, were added to the PACU inventory, with regular audits to prevent shortages. A “prize box” was introduced to offer children a sense of control and distraction after surgery. PNs and BAs assisted by escorting parents to the PACU and bringing belongings directly to the bedside, promoting comfort and minimizing delays in care.

Statement of Successful Practice: Verbal feedback from families and staff has been overwhelmingly positive. Post-intervention survey yielded (N=22) responses. Over 81% (n=18) RNs reported that the availability of those pediatric supplies in the PACU positively impacted the environmental, physical, psychosocial, and sociocultural comfort of care. This is achieved by improving the timeliness of care, enhancing warmth, managing pain, reducing the child’s fear and anxiety, promoting their comfort, and supporting the emotional well-being of children and families with age-appropriate supplies.

Implications for Advancing the Practice of Perianesthesia Nursing: The success of this initiative demonstrates how partnerships with Child Life, Supply Chain, Food & Nutrition, and Patient Navigation can close care gaps and advance patient-centered practices. This approach can be replicated in other adult-focused recovery units to improve readiness and responsiveness when caring for pediatric patients.