

Workplace Safety in Perioperative Services

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Abstract Background Information: Workplace violence in healthcare is a growing concern that significantly impacts staff safety and well-being. Perioperative departments present unique challenges and are often overlooked when workplace safety processes are developed. Patients in this setting may be anxious and stressed preoperatively, and some experience emergence delirium postoperatively. In our setting, two separate incidents of aggressive patient behavior within six months highlighted the absence of a formal process and underscored the urgent need for change.

Objectives of Project: The purpose of this project was to establish a standardized process that supports a proactive approach to identifying patients with a violent history or risk of aggression, while improving communication across Perioperative Services. The ultimate goal was to foster a safer environment for both patients and staff.

Process of Implementation: A multidisciplinary team from each perioperative department mapped the patient journey and identified key communication gaps related to aggressive behavior. The team collaborated with subject matter experts to design a workplace safety algorithm, beginning in Pre-Procedure Services and extending through the patient's discharge or transfer to the floor/ICU. A workplace safety survey assessed staff knowledge and guided targeted education to support implementation of the new process.

Statement of Successful Practice: The workplace safety algorithm and tools were utilized with three patients identified as having risk factors for aggression. Staff reported improved confidence, clearer communication between departments, and no safety escalations during these encounters. The algorithm will now be applied to every patient in the perioperative setting, with full rollout planned for 2025. This structured approach enhances communication, creates a safer environment for staff and patients, and ensures a consistent response to potential workplace violence.

Implications for Advancing the Practice of Perianesthesia Nursing: This project provides perioperative staff with clear, step-by-step guidance to identify risk factors and communicate effectively regarding workplace violence. By standardizing the process, perianesthesia nurses can play a key role in preventing incidents, improving team preparedness, and advancing a culture of safety within the perioperative environment.