

Accelerating Recovery: A Quality Improvement Initiative for Fast-Track Ophthalmology Cases in a Blended Post Anesthesia Care Unit

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Abstract Background Information: Growing ophthalmology case volumes present challenges to throughput and PACU capacity. Traditional recovery pathways can prolong stays for low-risk patients, creating bottlenecks. Evidence suggests that streamlined “fast-track” protocols may reduce recovery times and improve patient experience. Implementing such a pathway in the perianesthesia setting aligns with institutional goals of efficiency, safety, and patient-centered care.

Objectives of Project: To evaluate the impact of a fast-track pathway for select ophthalmology procedures on peri-anesthesia recovery time, patient throughput, and satisfaction while maintaining safety standards.

Process of Implementation: A quality improvement project was conducted here in Mount Sinai Queens. Eligible patients included adults (ASA I–II) undergoing cataract, glaucoma tube, or minor anterior segment surgeries. A retroactive cohort comparison was performed between fast-track patients and those receiving standard recovery (N = X vs. Y). Metrics included PACU recovery duration, total perioperative time, unplanned admissions, postoperative complications, and patient satisfaction scores.

Statement of Successful Practice: The fast-track pathway for ophthalmology cases improved efficiency and patient experience in the perianesthesia setting. Recovery bottlenecks previously delayed discharges and strained PACU capacity. By streamlining care for low-risk patients such as cataract and minor anterior segment cases, recovery times decreased without compromising safety.

Nurses played a central role in patient selection, education, and outcome monitoring, working closely with anesthesia and surgery teams. Results showed shorter PACU stays, stable complication rates, and higher patient satisfaction with faster, smoother discharges.

This initiative highlights nurse-led innovation in redesigning perioperative processes to improve throughput while maintaining safe, patient-centered care.

Implications for Advancing the Practice of Perianesthesia Nursing: This initiative highlights the crucial role of nurses in enhancing efficiency while ensuring safety and quality. By leading patient selection, recovery protocols, and discharge readiness, nurses drove meaningful process redesign. The model offers a scalable framework for other low-risk populations, underscoring the value of interprofessional collaboration across anesthesia, surgery, and administration. Sharing results in professional forums fosters continuous improvement and ensures perianesthesia nursing remains a leader in evidence-based, patient-centered innovation