

GRACEful Perioperative Care: Gender Recognition and Affirmative Care Through Education

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Abstract Background Information: Nurses provide bedside care to patients across the gender continuum, yet receive no formal gender-affirming care education. This often leads to consequential knowledge gaps when caring for transgender patients, particularly patients undergoing gender-affirming surgeries. Gender-diverse patients report a high rate of negative interactions with healthcare providers across the country. There exists a significant lack of transgender health education offered at nursing/medical schools and residency programs, meanwhile internal surveys have shown nursing staff overwhelmingly support gender-affirming care education for all staff. The Gender Recognition and Affirmative Care through Education (GRACE) Program was created to address this gap in education.

Objectives of Project: The GRACE Program's goal is to provide interdisciplinary and collaborative education and support for staff to provide affirming, state-of-the-art, evidence-based care that supports each transgender or gender-diverse patient's individual journey.

Process of Implementation: Allied providers were recruited to assist with education development and creation of an extensive educational framework for a group of volunteer nurses to become GRACE Ambassadors. Ambassadors received multimodal education, including online trainings as well as lectures with the GRACE Program Medical Director covering a broad range of gender diversity topics in addition to more focused perioperative care. Thoughtful discussions were held regarding proper gender terminology, addressing internal biases, implications for care and consent, sensitivity of the pediatric population, and positive patient outcomes. Once Ambassadors received training, they then became the primary nurses assigned to care for all gender-diverse patients in the perioperative region.

Statement of Successful Practice: GRACE Ambassadors are champions, advocates, and providers of evidence-based care for our gender-diverse patients. With knowledge and humility, Ambassadors serve as a resource to guide other members of the healthcare team in providing a positive healthcare experience for one of our most vulnerable patient populations.

Implications for Advancing the Practice of Perianesthesia Nursing: There is a vast knowledge gap that exists amongst health care providers when it comes to gender-affirming care. We've shown that providing this essential education helps better prepare providers to care for this vulnerable population and leads to more positive healthcare experiences for both patients and providers.