Enhancing Health & Well-Being in Children and Adolescents: A Multidisciplinary Approach in the Akron Children's Hospital Perioperative Surgical Home

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Background

Akron Children's is an independent pediatric facility with two campuses, six regional health centers and 50+ primary and specialty care locations throughout Ohio. Children and adolescents increasingly face complex health challenges, including chronic conditions, mental health concerns, and socioeconomic barriers. The care team at Akron Children's identified an opportunity to address these challenges through expansion of the Perioperative Surgical Home (PSH), integrating evidence-based, holistic care strategies to support long-term patient outcomes.

Local Problem

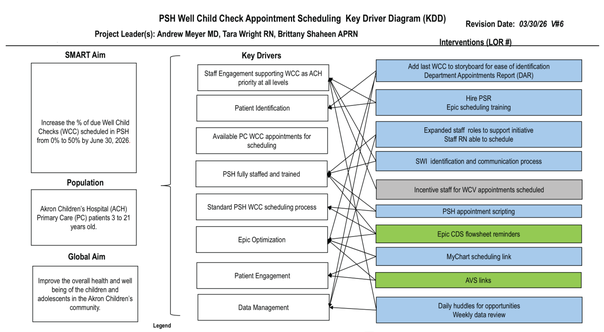
It was found that many Akron Children's pediatric patients were behind on their well child checkups (WCC). Primary prevention is paramount, and WCCs are more than routine checkups—they are essential opportunities that directly contribute to a healthier population by addressing physical and mental developmental needs. Specialty and Ambulatory clinics have an opportunity to identify and assist in scheduling overdue WCCs.

Objectives

- Improve physical, emotional, and social health outcomes for children and adolescents
- Promote equitable access to healthcare services across all demographics
- Educate families on importance of remaining up to date on (WCC)
- Empower perianesthesia nurses and ancillary staff to be advocates for holistic child health

Method

Nurses and advanced practice providers (APPs) led the scheduling of WCCs during their Perioperative Surgical Home (PSH) appointment. Nurse- and APP-led education emphasized preventive care, nutrition, mental health screening, and family engagement. Standardized work instructions (SWIs) and communication scripts were developed to support consistency and process reliability. This approach strengthened continuity of care and improved access, particularly for children at higher risk for fragmented or delayed services. A Key Driver Diagram (KDD) was developed to highlight interventions.



Interventions

Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) Cycle 1

During PSH appointment registration, patients due or past due for WCCs were identified and flagged with an icon on the Department Appointment Report (DAR).

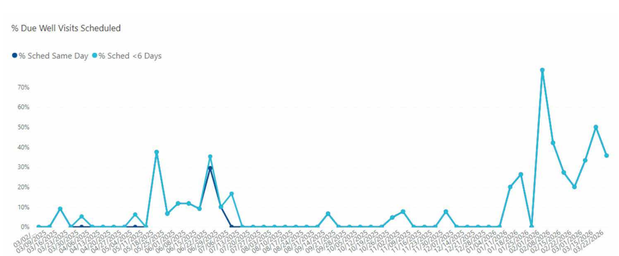
- Attempt to schedule appointments during registration at PSH appointment at front desk check in.
- Patient/family decline-APP would educate on the importance of WCC during appointment and recommend scheduling appointment
- If patient/family are agreeable, WCC was scheduled by front desk staff at end of visit

Challenges

- Low staff engagement decreases scheduling of WCC appointments
- Patient/family agreed to WCC scheduling with the APP but declined when checking out with front staff
- Staff having difficulties scheduling WCC using Epic or availability of open appointments/access
- Access to WCC scheduling varied based on training scope of practice
- Incorrect data reporting

PDSA Cycle 2

- Identify patients due/pass due for WCC via DAR, flags on the story board, and care gaps added
- Patient Service Representative (PSR) attempted to schedule appointments during registration at PSH appointment
- Patient/family decline-APP would educate on the importance of WCC during appointment and state "we can help you schedule that today"
- If patient/family are agreeable, the RN schedules the WCC when discharging patient
- Discuss opportunities during huddle for awareness, planning and staff engagement
- Share daily data updates and success stories during morning huddle
- Implemented in the main PSH and recently expanded to the Mahoning Valley office



Statement of the successful practice:

Although it is a work in progress, the initiative will lead to increased completion of WCCs, earlier recognition of behavioral and social health needs, and should improve family satisfaction. Nurses reported greater confidence in advocacy for holistic health, while collaboration across disciplines reduced duplication of services and enhanced the patient and family experience. Our current goal is to schedule 50% of eligible patients who need a WCC appointment. During March 2025 to March 2026, we were able to go from 0% to around 40%.

Opportunities for advancing the practice of perianesthesia nursing

- Expands the role of perianesthesia nurses beyond the surgical episode to enhance population health initiatives and improve health equity.
- Broadens PSH multidisciplinary care model to include traditional preventive, family-centered care functions.
- Aligns perianesthesia practice with the Quintuple Aim: improving outcomes, enhancing patient and family experience, reducing costs, supporting caregiver well-being, and promoting equity.
- Positions perianesthesia nurses as leaders in care coordination, advocacy, and innovation in evolving healthcare delivery models.

Conclusion/Next Steps

Initial process improvement (PDSA) demonstrated a strong start; however, staff absences highlighted a reliance on individual team members rather than a standardized process. In response, the team reconvened to refine the workflow, add redundancies as safety nets, and remains committed to continuous improvement through ongoing learning. Moving forward, efforts will focus on expanding to the Beachwood PSH site and incorporating the process into telehealth PSH appointments.