



Children's
Healthcare of Atlanta

Opening A Dedicated Cardiac Post Anesthesia Care Unit for Congenital Heart Patients

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PURPOSE

Our objective in creating a Cardiac PACU was ensuring safe Phase 1 recovery for congenital heart patients undergoing cardiac catheterization, some cardiac surgeries, and imaging under cardiac anesthesia.

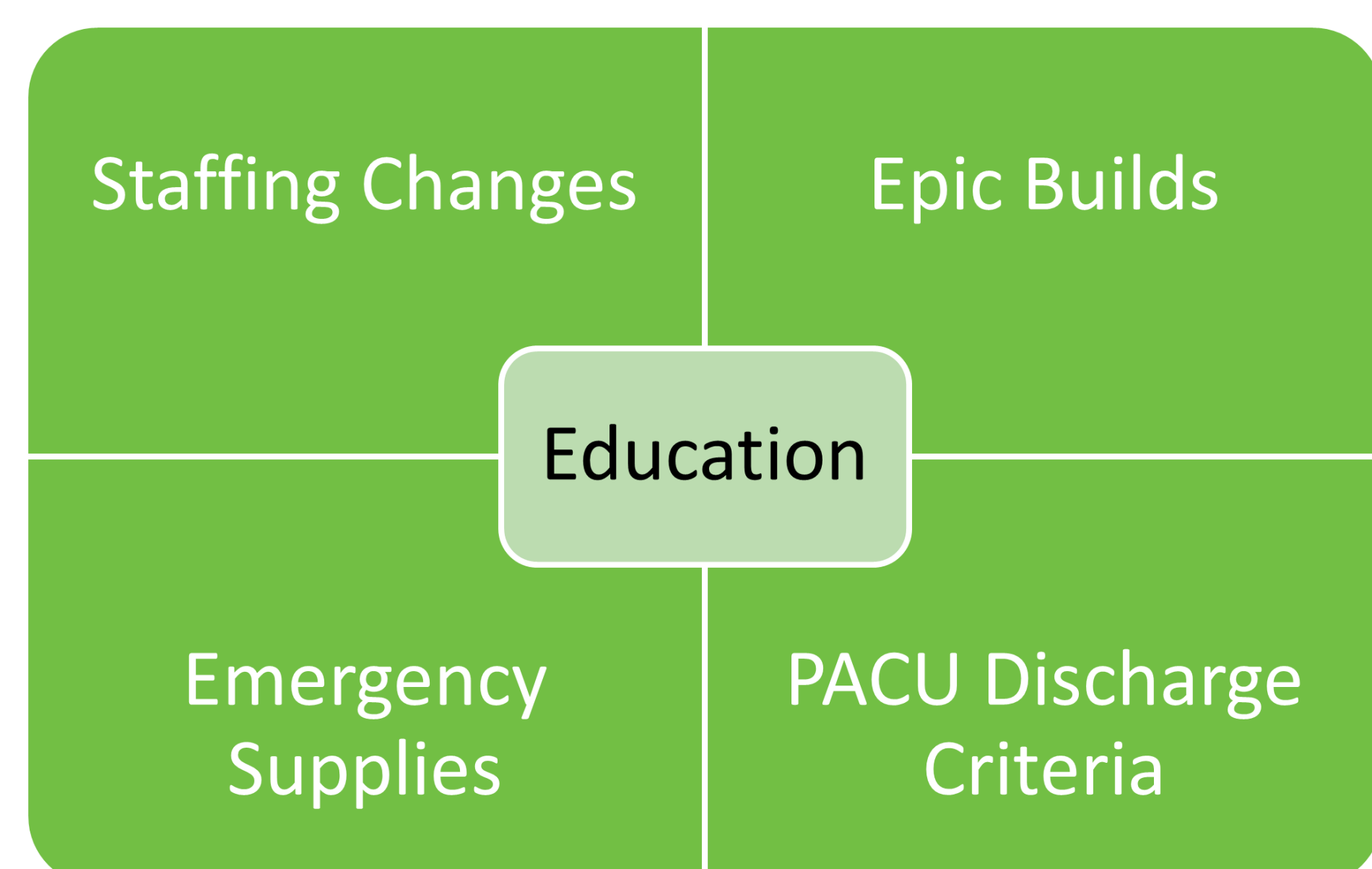
BACKGROUND

Children's Healthcare of Atlanta planned to open a new, 19 story, 2 million-square-foot hospital in the fall of 2024. The cardiac perioperative facilities at the existing hospital were spread across four separate units and two different floors.

Opening a new hospital presented an opportunity to consolidate cardiac perioperative care in one location as well as open a dedicated space for Phase 1 recovery from anesthesia.

METHODS

The primary methods for implementing this change can be described as either operational or educational.



RESULTS

Since opening in September 2024, the Cardiac PACU has successfully cared for over 1,000 pediatric patients undergoing Phase 1 Recovery from cardiac anesthesia.



Providers and staff have reported increased satisfaction with the new space, especially in terms of area size and patient monitoring.



Finally, our Cardiac PACU celebrated its initial visit from The Joint Commission with a successful survey in April 2025.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Nursing care continues to become more complex, as is illustrated in the care of our complex congenital heart patients.

Congenital heart patients are living longer, and the anatomical and physiological differences in these patients are particularly evident when undergoing anesthesia.

Congenital heart patients deserve specialized perianesthesia care, and our new Cardiac PACU delivers that proudly.

CONCLUSION

The opening of a new hospital presented an opportunity to dedicate space and resources to Phase 1 Recovery of all patients undergoing cardiac anesthesia.

Through careful attention to clinical operations and staff education, our congenital heart patients now receive specialized care in one location.



References upon request