

“I Feel Fine”: Fall Preventative Measures in the Post Anesthesia Care Unit (PACU)

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Background Information: Falls are linked to prolonged hospital stay, increased discharge to nursing homes, and higher health care expenditure. MIDAS reports indicated four patient falls occurred in the Post Anesthesia Care Unit (PACU) area from January 2017 to October 2017. 1 out of 4 falls resulted in patient injury, requiring a surgical intervention. A post fall focus study revealed that the falls happened while patients used the bathroom or ambulated to the bathroom. In all fall cases in the PACU, patients have expressed “I feel fine”.

Objectives of Project: The purpose of the study was to eliminate the patient falls in the PACU by adapting and modifying the Cedars Sinai Medical Center (CSMC) fall prevention measures to the PACU setting.

Process of Implementation: The CSMC fall preventions measures which included hourly rounding, yellow fall risk identification package, bed alarms, fall video, self-releasing belt, patient/family education, and staying with the patient in the bathroom were reviewed. ‘PACU specific fall prevention measures’ were created by eliminating the measures that were not applicable to the setting. The measures adopted focused on yellow fall risk identification and managing patient expectation at the point of intake in Preop through patient education that the nurse will accompany and stay with the patient in the bathroom. Standard practices with having patients sit and dangle for a few minutes prior to standing and ambulating were reinforced. The PACU staff were educated on the ‘PACU specific fall prevention measures,’ and the project was implemented in November 2017. In the instances where patient refused to have the staff stay in the bathroom, bathroom call light was provided, PACU staff stood outside the bathroom door, and patient’s refusal was documented in the electronic medical record.

Statement of Successful Practice: There were zero falls reported in the post-implementation phase after the adoption of the ‘PACU specific fall prevention measures.’

Implications for Advancing the Practice of Perianesthesia Nursing: Modifying and curtailing the hospital fall prevention measures to the PACU setting and focusing on the steps that apply to the setting have helped in decreasing the patient falls. The project needs to be continued and data collected for a longer period to monitor and ensure that the results are sustainable.