

Best Practice in Supporting Parents Witnessing Emergence Delirium in the PACU

Team Leaders: Susan Repucci BSN RN, Susan O'Leary BSN RN
Boston Children's Hospital, Boston, Massachusetts

Background Information: Emergence delirium (ED) is described as a mental disturbance seen during recovery from general anesthesia. ED is characterized by disorientation manifested by moaning, restlessness, and/or involuntary thrashing (Kain et al., 2004). ED is a common occurrence in pediatrics. In support of family centered care, parents/caregivers are brought to the PACU shortly after their child's arrival from the operating room. Although this approach promotes parental involvement, parents often observe their child experiencing ED. Witnessing pediatric ED can be upsetting for parents and many feel anxious, powerless, and unprepared to comfort their child. Despite the potential negative impact ED has on parental distress/satisfaction, within our unit there was wide variation in how nurses prepared parents for this potential experience.

Objectives of Project: Identify best practices related to anticipatory education about pediatric ED.

Process of Implementation: A literature search was executed in CINAHL Plus, PubMed, MEDLINE, and Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews using the search terms: emergence delirium, postoperative maladaptive behavior, pediatrics, children, education, parental distress, and parental satisfaction. Ten articles met the inclusion criteria and were critically appraised. Key findings were extracted using a table matrix for interpretation and synthesis. Although no literature specifically identified best practices for preparing parents who witness postoperative ED, our review identified a significant gap in understanding what this experience is like from the parent perspective.

Statement of Successful Practice: The results of the project were shared with perianesthesia staff and the goal to include ED education as part of standardized preoperative teaching was articulated. Nurses are collaborating with the department nurse scientist to develop a qualitative research study to explore the experience of witnessing a child's ED from the parents' perception. Findings from this proposed study will provide important insights for the development of the ED educational content.

Implications for Advancing the Practice of Perianesthesia Nursing: The identification of best practice through systematic literature reviews promotes quality care and helps to highlight important gaps in research. A comprehensive literature review is an essential first step to advancing the practice of perianesthesia nursing by ensuring that our educational content and approaches are evidenced-based.