

Decreasing Discomfort for Breast Sentinel Node Patients

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Background Information: Dr. Vieira, a fellowship trained breast surgeon practicing in Columbus, IN at Columbus Regional Health had post-surgical patients reporting to him in follow up visits that they experienced great care and a great experience with the exception of the Sentinel Node injection prior to the procedure. Patients were reporting significant pain with the injections and described the pain as “horrible” and the “worst part of the whole experience”. Dr. Vieira initiated a collaboration with the entire team—post anesthesia staff, anesthesia, and staff from outpatient surgery department, to come up with a process for addressing this major discomfort.

Objectives of Project: To find a way to decrease discomfort for patients receiving sentinel node injections prior to breast surgery.

Process of Implementation: Stakeholders were identified and brainstormed ideas to decrease discomfort for this particular population of patients. Several ideas were presented and a couple alternatives trialed before deciding on a practice that seemed to be optimal for patient comfort thereby enhancing the total patient experience.

Statement of Successful Practice: Patients requiring sentinel node injection began receiving their injections with light sedation in the post anesthesia care unit (PACU) *prior* to their procedure. They remain in the PACU to be monitored from the light sedation until ready to go back to the OR for their surgery, which is usually a minimal amount of time. Patients have since reported to even remembering getting the injections and reinforced this immediately post-operatively and at their follow-up office visits. This was adopted by the team as new standard of practice.

Implications for Advancing the Practice of Perianesthesia Nursing: A substantial part of perianesthesia nursing practice is decreasing discomfort for patients post-operatively. This process change also helped a select population decrease their discomfort from a necessary pre-surgical procedure that was previously causing significant discomfort for patients.