

Standardizing Outpatient Total Joint Replacement Discharge Process in PACU

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Background Information: In May 2020, the PACU adopted outpatient total hip arthroplasty (THA) and total knee arthroplasty (TKA) as outlined by the new CMS payment policy, signaling a shift in the PACU workflow post-pandemic deployment.

Objectives of Project: To standardize the discharge process of same day discharges (SDD) from the PACU over 12 months to 75% of all outpatient cases of total hip arthroplasty (THA) and total knee arthroplasty (TKA) procedures.

Process of Implementation: Designing a workflow with key stakeholders, including essential steps from booking surgical procedures, prehab education before surgery, and day of surgery surgeons, nurse practitioners, anesthesiologists, case management, and PACU RNs. Appointed a task force to identify causal factors for patients not discharged from the PACU on the same day. Electronic chat between the PACU RNs, PT, OT, Orthopedic Team, and Case Management was initiated to communicate the improvement and readiness of patients in recovery. Par levels of ambulatory devices were established. A hashtag group of assigned PT/OT staff was launched into electronic communication to expedite discharge. PT/OT coverage hours were extended from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m., from Monday to Friday, to accommodate late cases. PACU staff education on early mobilization and knee buckling was conducted. Weekly data is shared with all stakeholders during the HRO huddle.

Statement of Successful Practice: The baseline data indicated an average of over >75% of patients discharged from PACU. Implementing the same-day discharge program decreased LOS from 320 minutes to less than or equal to 200 minutes.

Implications for Advancing the Practice of Perianesthesia Nursing: The standardized process for promoting discharging TJA patients impacts patient outcomes in ways such as reduced LOS, enhanced patient outcomes, and improved stakeholder communication. This workflow is a template for best practices for similar settings within the hospital system and ambulatory care settings.