"Never Lose Your Nerve": Standardizing Perioperative Cranial Nerve Assessments Using a Cranial Toolbox

**Background**

In the perioperative setting, patients undergoing cranial procedures require thorough baseline neurological exams. Often, patients may be sedated or intubated in the perioperative phase of care and are unable to communicate the presence of neurological changes, such as altered cranial nerve function. Therefore, it is crucial for the healthcare team to be aware of potential neurological deviations so early intervention may be provided to ensure patient safety. The lack of consistent neurological baseline testing and lack of standardized practice in the perioperative setting has led to variability in how cranial nerves are assessed. To improve the quality of care and patient safety by hastening the identification and early intervention of neurological deviations, we partnered with perioperative leadership and educators to create a "Neuro Toolbox." The goal of the Neuro Toolbox is to enhance neurological knowledge and confidence levels in their neuro assessments.

**Objectives**

- To provide a standardized process and tools to perform congruent perioperative neuro assessments.
- To improve the quality of care and patient safety by harmonizing the identification and early intervention of neurological changes.
- To increase nursing knowledge and confidence levels in their neuro assessments.

**Process of Implementation**

We partnered with perioperative leadership and educators to collaborate on the creation of a standardized tool and development of a "Neuro Toolbox." We surveyed staff to assess neurological knowledge. A kit was created containing evidence-based tools to assist staff in identifying and early intervention of neurological deviations. The Neuro Toolbox was introduced to the staff and staff were surveyed to assess its impact on confidence and knowledge. A kit was created containing evidence-based tools to assist staff in identifying and early intervention of neurological deviations. The Neuro Toolbox was introduced to the staff and staff were surveyed to assess its impact on confidence and knowledge.

**Statement of Successful Practice**

The Neuro Toolbox is an example of how a collaborative, innovative, and standardized approach enhances our current practice. The Neuro Toolbox is a consistent, evidence-based tool that promotes accountability, safety, and optimizes patient outcomes. The Neuro Toolbox increases your confidence and openness in assessing cranial nerves in patients.

**References**


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Implication for Advancing the Practice of PeriAnesthesia Nursing

The Neuro Toolbox is an example of how a collaborative, innovative, and standardized approach enhances our current practice. Furthermore, it also:

- Promotes accountability, safety, and optimizes patient outcomes
- Provides confidence in caring for a highly specialized patient population
- Supports a culture of learning and continuous improvement
- Involves interdisciplinary collaboration to ensure best practices for patient care