Increasing safety after anesthesia

Perianesthesia Emergency Nurse (PEN): A Resource to Assist with High Acuity Post Anesthesia Care Unit (PACU) Patients

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BACKGROUND

- Increase in medical events noted
- Rise in higher acuity postoperative patients in PACU
- Staff perceived the need for additional emergency resources
- Literature search completed for perianesthesia programs to address emergent events; no results found

ROLE DESCRIPTION

- Assist with patients in the recovery room showing signs of altered hemodynamics or exhibiting higher acuity
- Act as a resource for high-risk medications, procedures and equipment that are infrequently encountered.
- Administer timely interventions in the PACU
- Provide staff support during an event
- Ensure patient is admitted to the right place at the right time (appropriate level of care ordered and remains in PACU until stable for the floor to which they are assigned)
- Support onboarding of staff with less previous high acuity clinical expertise and allow for safe care despite recruitment changes
- This is a PACU nurse with excellent clinical and communications skills with at least 2 years of critical care experience.
- Primarily staffed between 0730-2000 Monday-Friday.

IMPLEMENTATION

- Secured a physician champion
- Developed the role loosely based off a rapid response nurse model
- Compiled the necessary qualifications for the PEN
- Classes for the first PENs
- Program education to anesthesia, PACU nurses, management
- Created a database to log our events
- Trialed the role as an 8-week pilot, now permanent role

SUCCESSFUL PRACTICE

- The PEN is a permanent role supported by staff, anesthesia, management, and the organization.
- Since the program’s inception the average percentage of postanesthesia patients that trigger a rapid response call have decreased. If the patient is seen by the PEN in the PACU the percentage drops considerably further.
- Staff nurses were surveyed, “Do you feel the PEN role has been beneficial in our environment to help mitigate and assist with medical events?”, 98.4% responded “yes”.
- Database metrics have taught us valuable information that improves the quality and safety of the patient care we provide.