

## **EXPLORING THE NURSING CULTURE OF A POST ANESTHESIA CARE UNIT**

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**Introduction:** The repetitive theme of great “teamwork” among Post Anesthesia Care Unit (PACU) staff was frequently stated in the self evaluations of the RN’s. The staff used words like “got your back”, “there for you”, “help whenever you need it”, and “support from everyone”. The multitude of RN’s describing this phenomenon led us to question if this is unique to our institution or common in PACU’s. Finding no published articles about nursing culture in the PACU led us to begin our own study.

**Purpose:** The purpose is to make a baseline assessment of the PACU work group culture. Culture is the deep underlying assumptions, beliefs, & values that are shared by members of the organization and typically operate unconsciously (Casida 2007). This assessment is accomplished by identifying the cultural norms (behaviors) which are important to the work group, identifying the cultural norms which the group has differences of opinions, and identifying the cultural norms that the group would like to change.

**Method:** This non-experimental, cross-sectional study was conducted in a Phase I PACU at a tertiary care facility in the Northeast. The Nursing Unit Cultural Assessment Tool-3 (NUCAT-3) (Coeling, 1993), was administered to 39 Registered Nurses over a 3 week period via a secure online link. The NUCAT-3 is a 50 item instrument that asks respondents to rate, using a 5 point scale, my preferred behavior and my groups’ typical behavior. The survey also included nine demographic questions and five visual analogs that asked questions related to satisfaction with leadership, staffing, environment, job satisfaction, and nursing care.

**Results:** A 69% response rate was achieved. The data revealed behaviors important to the respondents: understanding patients’ feelings, make patients comfortable, and promote group morale. The three behaviors the respondents most wants to avoid were: staying angry with someone longer than a day, refusing to help your co-worker when asked, and going along with peer pressure. Behaviors the group wanted changed were: telling someone indirectly instead of directly that you dislike their behavior, staying angry with someone longer than a day, and to be nonjudgmental of someone else’s behavior.

**Discussion/Conclusion:** The NUCAT provided the basic assessment of the PACU’s work group culture. Exploring the nursing culture within the PACU was important because it identified behaviors that are important to the group, behaviors to avoid, and those behaviors that demonstrate differences of opinion which may cause group conflict. Using this knowledge can offer the group the opportunity to identify what changes to make within the unit.

**Implication/ Future Research:** Results from this study identified cultural behaviors that are important to a PACU. This knowledge will be useful in identifying important behaviors that contribute to the nursing culture. Future research should focus on studying the nursing culture within other PACU’s and Ambulatory Surgery Units to delineate any similarities or differences.