

Fast Track Program for Patients with Autism Spectrum Disorder in the Perioperative Setting

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Introduction: Patients with sensory disorders, specifically Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), may feel anxious, unsettled, or confused when taken out of their home routine when visiting the hospital for a surgical procedure.

Identification of the problem: Pre-Op/PACU noticed an absence of specialized programs for our sensory disorder patients in the perioperative department.

QI question/Purpose of the study: How can we create a program to streamline ASD patients through the perioperative department to reduce their stress and anxiety and have better patient outcomes?

Methods: A Fast Track Program was formed where patients with ASD could have a more streamlined process prior to surgical procedures. Utilizing IT, a report was built to identify pre-surgical patients with an ASD diagnosis. A pre-op phone call gathers patient history and identifies triggers for the patient prior to the procedural appointment. This enables shorter pre-op wait times and creates an individualized admission process.

Outcomes/Results: Data was collected from 20 families during a 7 month period; of those, 55% reported increased satisfaction with the reduction in check-in time. One-hundred percent of families reported their child felt calm after using the sensory room and that their needs had been met throughout the perioperative stay.

Discussion: We have encountered some limitations throughout the process. Only the ASD diagnosis is used at this time versus all sensory disorder patients. If the ASD diagnosis is not documented in the electronic medical record (EMR), it is difficult to identify if the patient has autism. Other challenges for this program are parents being available for a pre-call prior to surgery, and quiet rooms being available in recovery.

Conclusion: The Fast Track Program has been an amazing quality improvement initiative to our department. Once our Fast Track Program gains more traction, we would like to share our strategies with care areas throughout Phoenix Children's Hospital.

Implications for perianesthesia nurses and future research: It is our mission to pass on the successes of our program to nurses around the country who are interested in tailoring a program such as this to ease the perioperative process for this unique population.