

PACU Critical Care Program: Increasing Preceptor Knowledge and Confidence to Foster Future Generations of RNs

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Introduction: An academic medical center's Post-Anesthesia Care Units (PACU) have increased bed space due to increasing surgical volume, patient acuity, and lack of Intensive Care Unit (ICU) beds. Often patients in the PACU require ICU care, requiring an increased stay in PACU due to increased monitoring requirements and medical interventions to stabilize patients postoperatively.

Identification of the problem: Additional Critical Care (CC) training was evident as PACU Registered Nurses (RN) voiced widespread lack of confidence and knowledge in caring for post-surgical ICU patients. Providing CC education to all current PACU RNs is as unrealistic as it is time consuming and cost ineffective.

QI question/Purpose of the study: The project's goal was to create a program that increases CC knowledge and confidence levels in the PACU RN preceptors, who mentor and precept new employees, meanwhile mentoring current PACU staff.

Methods: A four class series, increasing in difficulty was completed over several months to allow the participants to learn and apply the concepts in small increments to maximize learning. Concepts included: post-surgical patient assessment, device management of various pacemakers, external ventricular devices, hemodynamics, lab interpretation and post-surgical complication management. Instruction consisted of didactic lectures and High Fidelity Simulation (HFS). A fifty-question pre and post intervention CC knowledge test and a thirteen-question Likert scale confidence survey measured the effectiveness of the program. Furthermore, a forty-item RAPIDS-Tool was used on day one and on the final day during HFS to evaluate participants' performance rescuing a patient's deteriorating condition.

Outcomes/Results: Confidence levels increased from 3.14 to 4.14 noting a 20.1% increase. The CC knowledge score increased by 27.4%. Additionally, the RAPIDS-Tool score increased from 15.3 to 36.5, noting a 53.1% score increase.

Discussion: Results indicate that the CC class improved confidence and knowledge; most importantly, it improved assessment skills and response to deteriorating patients. Participants voiced their intent to teach learned CC concepts to new employees and colleagues.

Conclusion: CC Concepts Program improved participants' confidence, knowledge and response to deteriorating patients.

Implications for Perianesthesia Nurses and Future Research: Including the CC program to PACU preceptor programs may benefit all PACU RNs via confident PACU preceptors/ mentors who share their new knowledge with other staff members caring for critical PACU patients.