

## **Improving Timely Discharges and Transfers Out of the PACU**

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**Introduction:** The PACU plays a critical role in the perioperative process, serving as the transition point for patients recovering from anesthesia before moving to inpatient care or being discharged. Inefficiencies in discharges and transfers from the PACU can lead to delays in the OR and SDS, negatively impacting overall patient flow and satisfaction.

**Identification of the Problem:** When a patient cannot transfer from the PACU promptly, delays occur within the Operating Room and Same Day Surgery. This effort to make a difference and change our process for discharge and transfer led us to form a PACU Handoff project.

**QI Question/Purpose of the Study:** The purpose of the PACU Handoff Project is to improve the efficiency of patient discharges and transfers from PACU.

**Methods:** For this project, our team utilized the Cincinnati Children's Improvement Science Model (ISM). A key driver diagram, completion of a PDSA, and analysis of data were used to guide interventions.

**Outcomes/Results:** Interventions included creation of a handoff checklist, staff education, order placement, and internal transport. The centerline shifted from 72.3% to 82%. This demonstrates a positive trend toward the project's goal of reaching 85%.

**Discussion:** The PACU Handoff Project addresses a critical component of perioperative care: the timely discharge and transfer of patients from the PACU. As previously mentioned, delays in PACU discharges can significantly impact the flow within the Operating Room and Same Day Surgery departments. Understanding the underlying causes of these delays was essential for our project, and the formation of a multidisciplinary PACU handoff team allowed us to tackle the issue collaboratively.

**Conclusion:** In conclusion, the PACU Handoff Project has made notable strides in improving the timely discharge of patients, thereby enhancing overall perioperative flow. The collaborative efforts of the PACU handoff team, combined with a commitment to data-driven improvements, have laid a solid foundation for ongoing quality improvement initiatives.

**Implications for perianesthesia nurses and future research:** Anesthesia nurses can play a pivotal role in ensuring smooth communication among PACU staff, surgical providers, and acute care teams. The introduction of a handoff checklist emphasizes the need for standardized protocols. Investigating the effectiveness of similar interventions in different hospital settings or departments could yield insights into best practices and adaptable strategies that other facilities could implement.