

Assessing the Efficacy of Postoperative Phone Calls on Patient Outcomes and Satisfaction

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Introduction: The increase in ambulatory surgical procedures in developing countries is attributed to advancements in surgical and anesthetic techniques, leading to faster recovery, lower complication rates, and enhanced patient satisfaction. Postoperative phone calls are proposed as a strategy to ensure patient safety and quality care by following up on patients' recovery after surgery.

Identification of the Problem: Despite the potential benefits of postoperative phone calls—such as improved patient satisfaction and reduced readmission rates—existing research on their efficacy is inconclusive. Some studies indicate no significant benefits, prompting the need for a comprehensive evaluation of this practice.

QI Question/Purpose of the Study: This quality improvement project sought to determine if the implementation of postoperative phone calls led to increased patient experience scores related to communication with nurses, decreased readmission rates and reduce visits to the emergency department?

Methods: We used the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) methodology for this project. Patients aged 18 and older who underwent ambulatory surgical procedures received structured phone calls within 24 to 48 hours post-discharge. Data on communication scores, readmission rates, and emergency department visits were collected and analyzed.

Outcomes/Results: The project utilized databases such as HCAHPS via Press Ganey for patient satisfaction metrics. Our data reveal a slight improvement in Likelihood to Recommend (Top Box Score 84.75% to 87.50%; percentile rank 43-49 to 55-93), Communication with Nurses Top Box Score increased from 89.63% to 100% (percentile rank 10-24 to 46-99), and Facility/Personal Treatment Top Box Score increased from 93.79% to 100% (percentile rank 5-24 to 5 to 99).

Discussion: Our data on Likelihood to Recommend have improved but require continued improvement. Our data may be attributed to the higher surgical volumes during the latter part of a calendar year, which results in quicker throughput. As a result, patients may feel they are receiving less individualized care and attention.

Conclusion: Our data provide support of the impact of postoperative phone calls on patient outcomes, specifically related to improved patient satisfaction and reduced healthcare utilization.

Implications for perianesthesia nurses and future research: Findings from this project inform best practices for perianesthesia nurses, emphasizing the importance of follow-up communication in enhancing patient care. Future research or projects should explore long-term effects of postoperative calls and consider variations in patient demographics to tailor communication strategies effectively.