

Communicating Perioperative & Procedural Delays: Enhancing Patient Experience

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Introduction: Effective communication regarding perioperative delays is critical for patient satisfaction. Delays often frustrate patients, and inadequate communication exacerbates the situation, negatively impacting the patient experience.

Identification of the Problem: In early 2023, the perioperative services department at a tertiary academic medical center ranked in the 20th percentile nationally and the 6th percentile in the University HealthSystem Consortium (UHC) for patient satisfaction in communicating delays.

QI Question/Purpose of the Study: The aim of this project was to improve the communication of delays to patients experiencing delays on the day of surgery, enhancing patient satisfaction through the implementation of standardized communication strategies.

Methods: Using the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) framework, several interventions were implemented:

1. **AIDET® Training:** 100% of perioperative nursing staff completed training on AIDET® communication principles (Acknowledge, Introduce, Duration, Explanation, and Thank You) to ensure consistent messaging during patient interactions.
2. **SMS Notifications:** A custom text messaging system was introduced in September 2023 to notify patients of delays exceeding 15 minutes. After a successful pilot, it was expanded to all surgical patients in October 2023.
3. **Monthly Data Review:** An interdisciplinary taskforce was formed to review patient satisfaction data and adjust the interventions as needed.

Outcomes/Results: Initial results indicated mixed feedback. While some patients appreciated the timely SMS updates, others continued to report dissatisfaction with long wait times. As of February 2024, the facility's ranking improved to the 15th percentile of the UHC for patient satisfaction in delay communication.

Discussion: While the SMS system and AIDET® training showed promise, challenges such as inconsistent staff adherence, lack of automation, and language barriers persisted. Addressing these issues will be crucial for sustaining improvements.

Conclusion: This quality improvement initiative demonstrated the importance of clear, consistent communication in managing patient expectations during perioperative delays, and maintaining a positive patient experience. Future efforts will focus on refining these processes and enhancing patient-centered communication strategies.

Implications for perianesthesia nurses and future research: Perioperative nurses play a key role in improving patient communication. Continued quality improvement initiatives can help standardize practices and better utilize technology to enhance the patient experience.