

Influence of the Nurse Assistant Role in the PACU

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Introduction: Nursing Assistants (NA) in the Post Anesthesia Care Unit (PACU) differ from inpatient NAs, as they facilitate patient recovery as a team with the RN post-operatively. As we returned from deployment post COVID, the role of PACU NAs shifted from bedside care to servicing patient transports to support staffing shortages, which left bedside RNs without aide at the bedside.

Identification of the Problem: In response to nurse concerns of additional support from NAs, we set a goal to improve RN satisfaction with the role of the NA in the PACU by 10%.

EBP Question/Purpose: The PACU nurse leadership and education committee engaged to restructure the role of the NA in PACU to improve RN satisfaction and to align the NA focus back to supportive patient care at the bedside and with ASPAN standards.

Methods/Evidence: Utilizing LEAN methodology, the NA role was expanded to encompass their full scope of practice at the bedside, and the responsibility of performing patient transports from PACU was reallocated to a Centralized Transport Service over a 6 month period. NAs were educated on perioperative bedside care tasks, our Shared Governance Model, Jean Watson's Theory of Caring and the 10 Caritas Processes.

Significance of Findings/Outcomes: The total number of transports performed by NAs decreased by 20%. Centralized Transport response time decreased from an average of 56 minutes to 11 minutes. This shift in workload allowed the NAs to remain in the PACU to assist the RN at the bedside. Overall RN satisfaction increased 12.5%. Although it was initially a challenge to wait for transport services to arrive to PACU, those times decreased as RNs increasingly utilized the service. The improved availability of NAs on the unit and their re-education helped boost patient care initiatives, which helped RN satisfaction. Simultaneously, we experienced a significant increase in our unit's patient experience scores, an encouraging finding to our study. Metrics related to patient comfort improved, with a 20% sustained increase in comparison rank.

Implications for perianesthesia nurses and future research: NA participation was approached with engaging exercises to encourage ways for them to influence their own workflow. This project can influence other units to investigate how to improve their workflow as it relates to RN satisfaction.