Enhancing Perioperative Care for Special Needs Dental Patients in Ambulatory Surgery Setting

Primary Investigator: Aimee Cusic BSN RN CAPA
Co-Investigators: Donna Dolezal MSN RN CPAN CAPA, Sheri Parman RN CAPA,
Molly Kucera MBAHC BSN RN CNAMB CNOR, Emily Rod MSN RN CMSRN,
Michael Tongi BSN RN SRNA
University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA

Introduction: Identifying the needs of special needs patients prior to their scheduled procedure to address safety concerns for both patients and staff.

Identification of the Problem: Delay in OR start time and dissatisfaction was identified amongst the staff concerning the ability to provide safe care for the special needs dental population. This issue stemmed from a lack of knowledge and preparedness in addressing the individualized needs necessary to provide safe patient care.

EBP Question/Purpose: To identify needs and considerations necessary to provide safer and more individualized care in the perioperative setting for special needs dental patients.

Methods/Evidence: A literature review on specialized care for dentistry patients with autism in procedural settings was conducted. Bakas et al. (2015) found completing an adaptive care screening tool before patient arrival helped in creating a more individualized care plan. It is recommended that patients with special needs have an alert in the EMR to facilitate early identification by the multidisciplinary team (King et al., 2022). A flag was assigned in the EMR to alert the care team of patient-specific information collected from caregivers on the day of the procedure.

Significance of Findings/Outcomes: A pre-survey of the multidisciplinary team revealed 80% of staff faced challenges in providing safe care to the special needs patient population. Additionally, only 58% of the scheduled procedures entered the OR with on-time starts. Changes in workflow and the implementation of new strategies increased on-time starts to 71% over a one-month period, bringing them closer to the overall goal of 80%. A follow up strategy will be conducted in November 2024 to evaluate ongoing challenges in patient care.

Implications for perianesthesia nurses and future research: The use of the EMR for early identification of patients with special needs has resulted in a decrease in delayed OR start times, improved communication, and higher satisfaction among the multidisciplinary team. Early identification has enabled the care team to develop a customized care plan, enhancing safety and satisfaction for patients and staff. Future research will involve ongoing evaluation and adjustments as necessary to achieve the 80% on-time start goal and further enhance the quality and safety of patient care.