

Empowering Nurses by Implementing Shared Governance

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Introduction: Shared governance is a framework for shared decision-making that improves nursing practice and accountability (Porter-O'Grady, 2019). It empowers frontline nurses by giving them a voice and autonomy to influence their practice. A Mountain West academic medical center adopted the councilor model of shared governance. An oncology same-day surgery (SDS)/ postanesthesia care unit (PACU) with 17 SDS beds and 18 PACU bays, serving 62 patients daily (60% inpatients, 40% outpatients), was tasked with implementing a new department process for shared governance.

Identification of the Problem: The problem is a lack of nurse autonomy. In the 2023 RN Satisfaction Survey, only 62% were satisfied with control over nursing practice. An October 2023 poll showed 54% felt excluded from decision-making, and a Spring 2024 SDS/PACU survey revealed dissatisfaction with accountability.

QI Question/Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this quality improvement project is to empower nurses by implementing a shared governance structure to improve nurse autonomy in an SDS/PACU department.

Methods: The SDS/PACU formed a team council with all staff as members. A team chair was selected, trained, and assigned a mentor. A team board was created to post problems and ideas. Weekly team huddles are led by the team chair. During the huddle, the Plan-Do-Study-Act model is used for each problem posted on the team board; new problems are discussed and prioritized; a team member is assigned to lead projects; the status of each ongoing and resolved problem is reviewed with the team.

Outcomes/Results: A total of 14 problems have been resolved, with 24 ongoing projects, such as improving the patient transport processes and pre-medicating patients for pain.

Discussion: Shared governance has given nurses a platform to voice concerns, likely improving autonomy and engagement. However, the annual RN satisfaction survey is still open, with results pending, delaying a full evaluation.

Conclusion: The project has yielded positive results, with several completed projects and several in-progress. Shared governance has resulted in nurse-led improvement in unit operations and patient care.

Implications for perianesthesia nurses and future research: Perianesthesia nurses' participation in shared governance strengthens the team, leveraging their expertise to enhance processes and improve patient outcomes. The next steps are to evaluate RN satisfaction survey results and complete a needs assessment.