

Creating Workflows and Standard Processes for a New Perioperative Oncology Unit

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Introduction: In May 2023, Winship Cancer Institute at Emory Midtown opened. This new operating unit serves as a comprehensive center allowing oncology patients and their families to receive operations and procedures (Interventional Radiology and Endoscopy) in a single hospital with consistency and ease of accessibility to their care team.

Identification of the Problem: The perioperative area at Winship Cancer Institute at Emory Midtown began at “Ground Zero”. This team was tasked with creating logistical and operational processes for the area. This was done by initiating workflows and standard processes for all related departments including: pre-op, PACU, OR, Endoscopy, and Interventional Radiology.

QI Question/Purpose of the Study: Do standardized workflows in a newly integrated Preop and PACU improve throughput, evidenced by shorter mean times from pre-procedure area to in-room (OR, IR, Endoscopy) and from recovery arrival to recovery discharge?

Methods: Using fishbone diagrams and throughput algorithms, standard workflows for the identified areas were created. An EPIC Cognito SlicerDicer dashboard was created for the analysis of minutes in Pre-op and in PACU. Times were compared from May 2023 (hospital inception) to May 2025.

Outcomes/Results: Over 2 years, with continued evaluation using the Plan-Do-Study-Act framework, minutes decreased in pre-op for all service lines. PACU minutes decreased for all service lines except IR/ENDO patients (increase of 2 minutes) and Gynecology (increase of 21 minutes).

Discussion: Standard workflows were created for patient care in pre-op and PACU. Training and implementation took place on May 10, 2023. The first case took place on May 15, 2023. Over 2 years, patient load increased from an average of 279 patients to 514 monthly. With the implementation and continued improvement of standard workflow, pre-op and PACU minutes times decreased even with a 45% increase in patient visits.

Conclusion: Standard workflows ensure efficiency in the number of minutes patients stay in the pre-op area and PACU for various service lines.

Implications for perianesthesia nurses and future research: At the inception of a new peri-operative unit, the creation of standard workflows and processes creates optimization in logistics and throughput.