

Does Strict Adherence to ERAS Protocols Improve Patient Outcomes?

Primary Investigator: Lori C. Sanders BSN RN CPAN

Baylor University Medical Center and

The Health Innovation Institute at Texas Christian University, Dallas, TX

Introduction: Early Recovery After Surgery Protocols (ERAS) have long been known to improve patient outcomes after colorectal surgery but how do you ensure compliance in the PACU when staff is inundated with protocols? How do we fight 'Protocol Fatigue' and ensure patients get the best care.

Identification of the Problem: ERAS protocols, especially early mobilization, can seem like just another thing the nurse has to do. Because early mobilization can be painful for the patients and time consuming for the nursing staff, our compliance rate was very low.

EPB Question/Purpose:

- P: Postoperative Colorectal ERAS Patients and the PACU Staff that care for them
- I: Focused Adherence to the ERAS Protocols related to early mobility and surgical site infection (SSI) reduction
- C: Current low staff buy in
- O: Decrease Length of stay, Lower SSI, fewer postop complications
- T: June 2024-June 2025

I used Medline, Google Scholar and the amazing BUMC Librarians. Twelve relevant articles were used.

Methods/Evidence: PACU nurses were encouraged to prioritize early mobilization including dangling the patients on the side of the bed as they could tolerate at two hours postop and ambulating patients in the PACU within 4-6 hours when transfers to the floor are delayed. Re-education was also provided to remind nurses of the importance of ERAS protocols: the reduction of length of hospital stay (LOS) as well as surgical site (SSI) infection reduction.

PACU Supervisors gave staff verbal reminders when nurses were given an ERAS patient and audited our ERAS charts to ensure compliance. We also audited tight temperature control, early introduction of PO fluids and use of Incentive Spirometry use within two hours of admission to PACU.

Significance of Findings/Outcomes: After re-education and committing to strict adherence to the ERAS protocols, we had a reduction in LOS by almost 1 full day (0.96 Hospital Day). The nurses reported better understanding of why the ERAS protocol is important and it's benefits to the patients.

Implications for perianesthesia nurses and future research: ERAS Protocols are helpful in improving patient outcomes. However, nurses need to be educated on how and why these protocols work and supported to help implement them. Adding patient care techs to help with the safe ambulation of patients would also increase compliance.