

Ensuring On-Time First OR Case Starts by Preventing Registration Delays

Primary Investigator: Robin Carabin BSN RN

Co-Investigators: Michele Kovacs RN, Stephanie Runner RN, Erin Luxich BSN RN,
Elizabeth Donaldson BSN RN
Virtua Health, Marlton, NJ

Introduction: In February 2025, our operating room (OR) first case on-time start (FCOS) rate was 72%. Following the opening of a seventh OR in March 2025, this rate dropped to 38%. The expansion increased patient volume without corresponding adjustments to the registration process. Registration delays prevented patients from being transferred promptly to the Surgical Processing Area (SPA), disrupting the start of first cases and cascading into surgical delays.

Identification of the Problem: First case OR times were not going off on time due to registration delay.

EPB Question/Purpose: Modify registration process to reduce patient wait times and decrease delays for first case start times.

Methods/Evidence: On March 11th, the patient liaison—responsible for guiding patients from hospital entry through registration to the surgical processing area (SPA)—was shadowed from 5:30 AM to 10:00 AM. Patient flow was timed from arrival through registration to entry into the SPA for surgical preparation. Communication among the patient liaison, registration staff, and SPA personnel was evaluated.

Significance of Findings/Outcomes: The evaluation revealed registration delays were a barrier to patient flow. Patients arriving at 5:30 AM did not begin registration until 5:40 AM. Manual processes, including printing and annotating surgical schedules, consumed valuable time.

Implications for perianesthesia nurses and future research: Discussion/Implications: OR delays are costly, with estimates of \$20 to \$150 per minute depending on location and surgical specialty (Blair et al., 2024). Patient arrival to the Surgical Processing Area (SPA) is essential for preoperative preparation and maintaining OR schedules. Registration delays disrupt workflow and delay administration of critical pre-op medications.

To address these inefficiencies, nursing met with leadership from SPA and registration. On March 16th a new process was implemented: two registrars now begin at 5:30 a.m., one stationed in SPA to provide bedside registration. SPA nurses now generate a consolidated report, including arrival and start times, eliminating the registrar's need to manually compile and annotate. These changes have improved communication, reduced registration-related delays, and increased FCOS rates, and enhance both operational efficiency and patient satisfaction (Mitchell et al., 2025).

These process changes increased our FCOS rate to 63% for March 16-31, 2025, 65% for April 2025, and 71% for May 2025. We believe the change in the registration process improved our FCOS.