

# Completed Nursing Assessment 24 Hours Prior to Surgery: Impact On Patient Safety And Surgical Readiness

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## INTRODUCTION

Timely registered nurse (RN) assessments—completed within 24 hours prior to surgery—are essential to patient safety and surgical readiness. Ensuring timely completion mitigates perioperative risks, minimizes procedural delays, and promotes high-quality, coordinated surgical care.

## IDENTIFICATION OF THE PROBLEM

Gaps in the preoperative evaluation workflow lead to inconsistent identification of clinical risks and reduced surgical readiness. When RN assessments are delayed, key safety indicators may be missed, including:

- Cardiac clearance not completed in time for anesthesia review
- Required sleep study missing for pediatric patients with BMI > 99th percentile
- Upper respiratory symptoms identified too late, increasing anesthesia-related respiratory risk

These issues contribute to preventable complications and day-of-surgery delays or cancellations.

## PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This quality improvement project examines the effect of timely RN preoperative assessments on patient safety, surgical readiness, and perioperative workflow efficiency.

## METHODS

Daily audits were conducted using the tracking board to verify completion of RN assessments. RNs followed a standardized outreach protocol based on case type, with two attempts for minor cases and three attempts for major cases or patients from extended-care facilities. If the patient could not be reached, a brief message requesting a return call was left.

Completed assessments triggered review of required preoperative documents, entry of preoperative orders, and updates to the communication tool. The tracking board was updated prior to handoff to the nurse responsible for 24- and 48-hour cases.

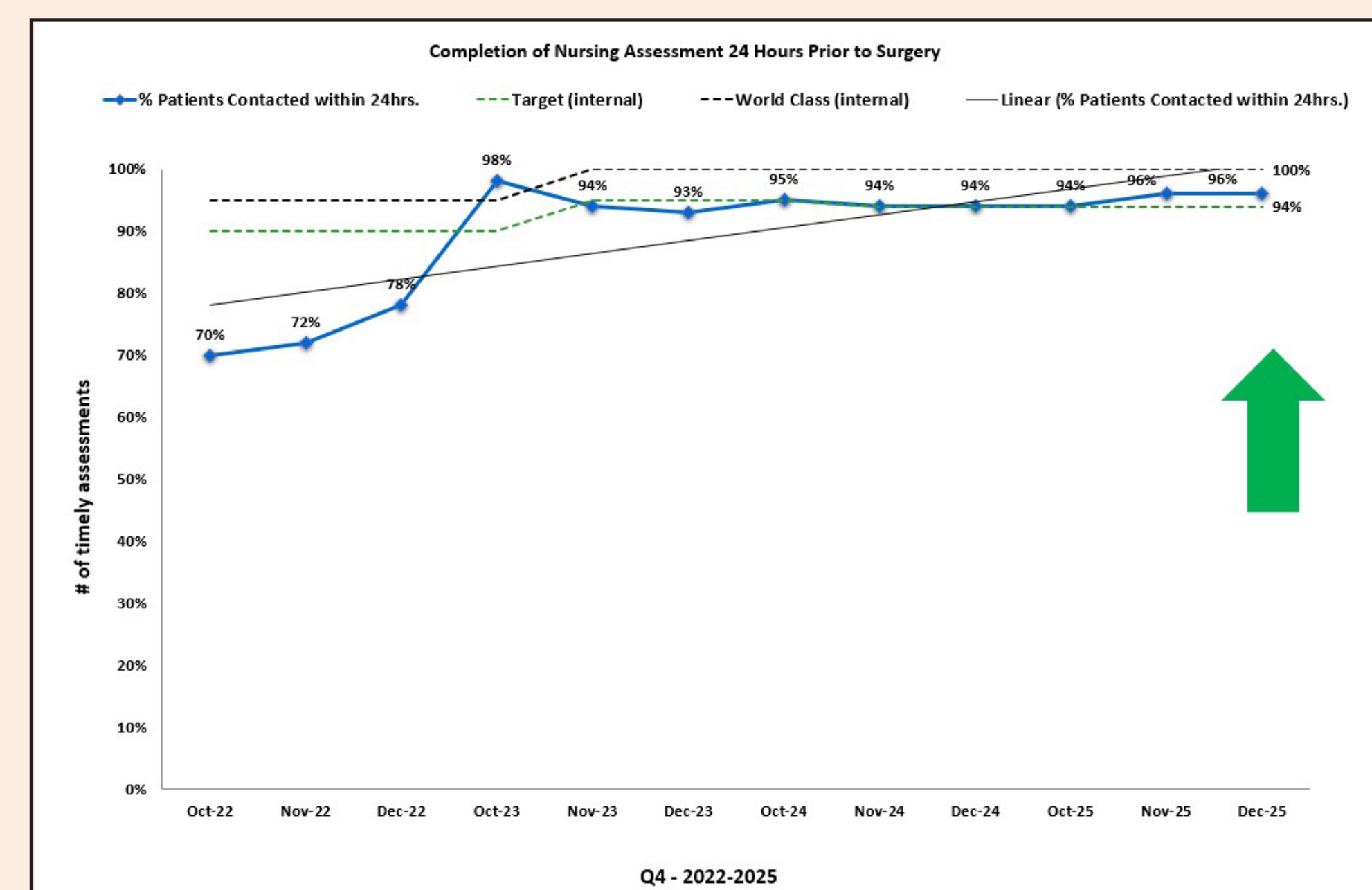
*Note: Internal performance targets were revised mid-project as part of systemwide alignment. The graph reflects both the original and updated targets.*

## OUTCOMES

Data from the daily tracking board demonstrate a significant improvement in timely completion of RN assessments. During the last quarter of 2025, 95% of assessments were completed within 24 hours prior to surgery, an increase from 73% during the same period in 2022. This improvement enabled earlier detection of potential health issues, improved surgical preparedness, and streamlined perioperative care and patient flow.

## RESULTS

### Completion of Nursing Assessment 24 Hours Prior to Surgery



## DISCUSSION

Timely RN assessments serve as a primary safeguard against perioperative complications by enabling early risk detection and supporting smoother surgical workflows. Routine audits and standardized protocols ensure consistent, high-quality care.

Pertinent information—such as history of anesthesia complications, medical history, and abnormal laboratory results—is forwarded to anesthesia for review and recommendations.

## CONCLUSION

Completion of RN assessments within 24 hours prior to surgery is critical to ensuring patient safety, surgical readiness, and efficient perioperative care. Timely and thorough assessments reduce procedural delays, prevent complications, and improve patient outcomes.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR PERIANESTHESIA NURSES AND FUTURE RESEARCH

- Positions PeriAnesthesia nurses as operational stewards and risk mitigators in surgical workflows.
- Emphasizes the necessity for standardized protocols and meticulous documentation during preoperative nursing assessments.
- Supports enhanced patient education and early risk detection to further improve perioperative outcomes.

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