Improving Inpatient Readiness for Surgery/Procedure: A Process Improvement Project

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**Purpose:** To improve the nursing practice of effective and safe preoperative preparation of inpatients prior to their transition in the surgical phase of their hospital course

**Background/Significance:** Acutely ill patients admitted at SMC-CH who undergo surgeries are transitioned from the inpatient units to the Pre-Op Care Unit (POCU). Staff RNs from POCU identified several gaps in nursing practice citing lack of nursing handoff as well as missing critical hard-stop documentation (the PreOp Checklist) of inpatients prior to transitioning in the procedural areas. Furthermore, patient flow inefficiencies were identified that placed patient safety at risk.

**Description:** To address immediate patient safety concerns and to improve the patient experience, a process improvement was implemented. A two-prong approach was utilized to address these gaps: (1) improving efficiency of the patient flow from acute care units to POCU to OR; (2) improving nursing practice of effective preop preparation through learning events/in-service spearheaded by the PreOp/PACU unit-based educator to inpatient RNs.

**Evaluation and Outcomes:** Following implementation, 48% of surveyed RNs stated presence of handoff to POCU from the inpatient units with 46% of them reporting adequate patient handoff to POCU. Additionally, since implementation, a total of 66% of surveyed RNs reported completion of the PreOp Checklist prior to POCU transfer. However, approximately 29% reported that questions/clarifications on the elements of the PreOp Checklist were unanswered prior to patient transfer to POCU.

**Conclusions:** Improving patient flow and communication to POCU allowed for identification of areas where vulnerabilities pose significant patient safety concerns. This resulted in practice collaboration of frontline nurses and nurse leaders, improved workflow process, and increased accountability between nurses in ensuring patient safety through effective handoff communication and improved preop patient preparation by the inpatient nurses.

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