

Using Text Messaging to Improve Communication and Patient Experience in a Perioperative Setting

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Introduction: COVID Pandemic and visitation restrictions presented a need for an alternate communication mode to keep the family/ patient informed in the perioperative setting

Identification of problem: Multiple patient concerns addressed the lack of updates from the operating room (OR) and Post Anesthesia Care Unit (PACU) areas. Literature shows a positive relationship between effective communication and patient experience. The quality of the relationship can be therapeutic for the patient. It plays a significant role in the outcome of cancer treatment. Without it, the quality of healthcare is impaired, and costs and negative patient outcomes potentially increase.

Purpose of Study: This project aimed to incorporate text messaging to enhance patient experience with a goal of increasing CAHP score for total communication to > 95% over 6 months.

Methods: A core group including Peri-op leadership, PACU and OR staff, and Peri-op informatics group developed a consent form and workflow to incorporate texting in EPIC that allowed patient status update to designated caregivers both manually and automatically. Additional equipment were installed and workflow was adjusted to integrate texting consent during surgery check in. Surgical case events documented in EPIC triggered automatic messages. Nurses also had the ability to select from a drop-down of 3 default messages to send to family members. The project was implemented in July 2021 after training all staff involved in the process.

Outcomes/Results: The Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS) patient experience score on total communication demonstrated significant improvement post implementation of this project. Pre implementation score was 91.39%, which increased to 95.75 % six months post implementation. Providing procedure updates through text messages increased patient satisfaction by more than 4%. The new practice was adopted well by patients and employees. On average, 60-68% patients opted in to receive text messages and the compliance rate for sending texts was above 99%.

Implication for perianesthesia nurses and future research: Implementation of text message communication resulted in increased patient communication and satisfaction. Therefore, it should be implemented and standardized in Perioperative settings to enhance communication and patient/family satisfaction.