The Problem

- Intervventional Endoscopy Unit, patient acuity and census increased
- Survey of nurses, more than 50% agree there is a potential risk for missing critical information in our current handoff practice.
- An opportunity to improve handoff thus the effectiveness of communication among caregivers (2011 Joint Commission NPSG).
- Current practice of verbal handoff has potentially resulted in a negative impact on patient care and safety.

Goal

Our goal is to implement a standardized patient nursing handoff within 6 months that will avoid missing vital patient information, duplication of information and ensure defined care goals are included.

The Team

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The Interventions

- An initial online survey of staff nurses was conducted in November 2014. Based on the results, a need for standardization of the handoff practice was identified.
- A Patient Handoff Form was trialed in January 2015 for 6 weeks and utilized in the Interventional Endoscopy Unit on patients requiring an admission bed or longer recovery time.
- Based on ongoing staff feedback, the form was revised after 4 weeks to identify nurse accountability.
- After 6 weeks, a follow-up survey was sent to staff nurses as part of a double-blind study to evaluate effectiveness of the form.

The Results/Progress to Date

For the month of January 2015, the tool and process was used on a subset of patients requiring hospital admission and longer stays in Recovery. Nurses were able to standardize handoffs resulting in a transparent communication of relevant and pertinent patient status with defined nursing goals without duplication.

Lessons Learned

- A more succinct way to document and follow a patient’s clinical status can result in improved outcomes such as in one case where an ICU admission was prevented.
- There must be patient accountability among staff members.
- Communication skills during nursing report are variable and by standardizing this process patient care can be improved.
- The form supplements, but does not replace the current documentation.
- Patient handoffs increase nurse’s awareness of the impact of good communication skills.

Next Steps/What Should Happen Next

- The tool will be submitted for official approval from forms committee.
- Continue to identify areas where critical patient information may be missed between caregivers.
- Continue iterations of the tool and process with PDSA cycles.
- Spread the use of the developed tool and process to all nursing staff in the department.

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