

TEAM

Doctors Hospital, part of Baptist Health South Florida, is a 281-bed community hospital located in Coral Gables, Florida. In early 2015, nurses in multiple departments caring for surgical patients began discussing the concepts of Enhanced Recovery After Surgery (ERAS) and the possibility of redesigning care for total joint arthroplasty hip (THA) and knee (TKA) patients to reduce surgical stress, promote recovery/convalescence, and empower patients.

SITUATION

An interdisciplinary team developed out of feedback from patients who said they wanted to spend less time in the hospital and more time convalescing at home. That feedback, combined with published research from a national conference, became the stimulus for orthopedic patient care professionals to collaborate to reduce the hospital length of stay for THA and TKA patients. Their successful care redesign is rooted in teamwork: The orthopedic surgeon is supported by a talented interdisciplinary team that includes an advanced registered nurse practitioner, nursing, physical therapy/occupational therapy, anesthesia, pharmacy, and a social worker/case manager. One notable aspect of this initiative is that the conception and follow-through of the effort was not a defined administrative or executive strategy, but rather came from professionals closest to the patient.

ACTIONS

The team redesigned systems, processes, and roles to develop a more person-centered program to support wellness and recovery for THA and TKA patients, and to prepare them for an earlier transition home. Within this endeavor, the team designed a more compressed care pathway for select patients to be discharged on the same day of surgery. For example, the team initiated orthostatic assessments of the patients to support their early mobilization. It pursued an immediate assessment of abnormal orthostatic changes and adjusted patients' care pathways accordingly. In addition, patients at high risk for postoperative nausea and vomiting were pre-emptively treated pre-operatively, intra-operatively, and post-operatively. By reducing the incidence of postoperative nausea and vomiting, patients could engage in fluid and nutritional intake within an hour of moving to the orthopedic unit without compromising early discharge.

From the beginning of their surgical journey, patients became included as active members of the team as they learned about surgical optimization strategies including nutritional advice, care processes, the roles of various team members, and the goals for their care—including their discharge criteria. Patients are prepared to transition out of the hospital much sooner to convalesce in the familiar and comfortable surroundings of their home with their family. Patients are an active part of the entire process and, as a consequence, they report their recovery as their own accomplishment. Moreover, the reduction in length of stay in the hospital has translated to a reduction in the cost of care.

IMPACT

Post-discharge calls show that TKA and THA patients are highly satisfied and also feel that their convalescence was facilitated by their ability to return home quickly following surgery. Length of stay reduced from 2.43 days in 2015 to 2.03 in 2016, with a further reduction to 1.98 in 2017. The percentage of THA patients who were discharged on or before their first postoperative day increased from 7.7% in July 2015 to 50% by July 2016. Rates for 30-day and 90-day readmissions have remained low (< 2.8%) and stable since the inception of the project.

The cost of care for this patient population decreased by 11.5% per patient from 2015 to 2016, and by 14.2% per patient from 2015 to 2017. A substantial portion of that reduction is related to decreased length of stay and decreased cost of inpatient care and services.

While specific nurse engagement measures for the orthopedic unit have always been above the NDNQI® benchmark, scores for Nursing Foundations for Quality measures have increased by 5.1% from 2015 to 2017. In addition, metrics for the NDNQI Practice Environment Scale increased by 8.5%, and increased for Job Enjoyment by 5.7%, in that same period. The metrics for the Interprofessional Scale Roll-Up increased by 5.1% from 2016 to 2017 as well.