

The Ambulation Correlation: How an early ambulation protocol can decrease length of stay for total joint replacement patients.

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Background

Based on EBP, ambulating total joint replacement (TJR) patients the day of surgery has been shown to decrease the LOS and prevent postoperative complications. TJR patients who were arriving to the nursing unit after 4pm were having to wait until the following morning to be ambulated by Physical Therapy. By implementing a standardized approach to early ambulation, the nursing staff were able to ambulate all TJR patients 4-6 hours post surgery.

Purpose

This innovative initiative was proposed to impact patient outcomes by increasing ambulation with post total joint replacement patients. Ambulating patients 4-6 hours post-surgery has been shown to decrease length of stay and post-operative complications. The idea of allowing nurses to ambulate post-surgical patients prevents delays in treatment that previously impacted patient outcomes.

Summary

To increase ambulation with post TJR patients, a four-step intervention was used.

- The nursing staff was educated on benefits of early postoperative ambulation.
- A post-test was used to measure the understanding of this intervention.
- After all staff were educated, a new protocol of early ambulation for total joint replacement patients was implemented. This included a new nightly routine done by nursing. The nursing staff will be responsible for ambulating each TJR patient between the hours of 1900-2200. The nurses will document the patient's tolerance of ambulation and distance in the patient's EMR.
- The TJR patients are required to attend a preoperative education class given by the total joint care coordinator. During this class, the early ambulation protocol is explained, and the patients obtain a clear understanding of the expectations post operatively. The patient learns our ultimate goal is for them to be ready to return home by post op day 2.
- Data collected by the total joint care coordinator is used to monitor results of the new early ambulation protocol.

Outcome

- The nurse is compliant with the early ambulation routine
- The nurse delivers evidence-base practice care through the early ambulation nightly routine.
- All TJR patients are ambulated post op day zero (POD0).
- All TJR patients are ambulated every night as part of the early ambulation nightly routine.

Results

- Prior to implementation 74% of TJR patients were ambulating POD0, increasing to 100% after implementation
- Prior to implementation, LOS was 2.45, decreasing to <2.1 after implementation
- This initiative was developed to increase the level of function to TJR patients, increase nursing and patient knowledge regarding treatment protocols, and decrease length of stay in the hospital.

**Results excluding patients with adverse reaction to PNB. Only patients discharged home were included in this data.*

