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A New Process for Ensuring the Safety of Patients Having Anesthesia Outside of the Operating Room

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Background: The Nurse Practitioners (NPs) in the Brigham and Women's Hospital Weiner Center for Preoperative Evaluation (WCPE) perform an extensive evaluation to assess patients' readiness for surgery. Patients having procedures requiring anesthesia outside of the traditional operating room (OOR) were not consistently evaluated in the same way. Procedures were postponed or canceled due to lack of information and patient comorbidities that required further workup.

Purpose: To safely address the special periprocedure concerns for patients receiving anesthesia in the OOR areas, the WCPE NP role was expanded to incorporate evaluations of this patient population.

Description: A core group of NPs volunteered to participate in the initiation of this service in the interventional radiology department. The service eventually expanded to include the endoscopy, CT/MRI, and emergency departments. The NPs were oriented to the patient population, procedures, anesthesia requirements, and area staff; and they established interdisciplinary relationships. Both inpatients and outpatients are evaluated, and the NP collaborates with the OOR anesthesia attending to develop an appropriate plan of care using the determined standards of documentation.

Results: The NP staff has gained increased knowledge of OOR procedures, anesthesia requirements, and special concerns. The role has been well accepted by, and integrated with, the OOR anesthesia team. Comprehensive preprocedure evaluations provide information to the OOR anesthesia attending. This process assists in resource allocation, contributes to safe patient care, and has led to a decrease in procedure delays and last-minute cancellations.

Conclusions: The comprehensive assessment of patients undergoing anesthesia in areas OOR generates safe, consistent patient care in the perianesthesia period.