

5 Tips to Make Your Anesthesiology Program Work for You

Surgical service is the engine driving your hospital's bottom line. Any inefficiency can disrupt everything—from the number of surgical cases the hospital handles to its ability to attract new patients and clinicians—hindering profitability.

The key to achieving a highly efficient surgical program is the strength of your anesthesiology partner and program. A well-functioning anesthesiology service keeps operating rooms running on schedule, track and ensure achievement of quality metrics and provide leadership and coordination for the entire perioperative program, contributing to the overall success of the hospital.

Building a high-performing anesthesiology program requires a multi-faceted strategy that takes into account what happens inside and outside the operating room (OR). Whether staff manages the anesthesiology program, or the hospital outsources it to a specialized service provider, the following five tips should help your anesthesiology program reach or exceed best practice levels.

START ON TIME, EVERY TIME

First case start accuracy is critical to sticking to the OR schedule throughout the day. If your facility has five surgeries scheduled to start at 8:00am and two of them start on time but the others start at 8:15 or 8:30, those delays can snowball, causing a number of problems that are frequently unrecoverable. Physicians performing those surgeries may be detained from seeing other patients in the hospital/office, or they may be late to another surgical case that was otherwise on time—



frustrating clinicians and potentially creating overtime expenses for the hospital which negatively impacts patient satisfaction scores. Part of the solution is making sure all activities in the days and minutes leading up to surgical start time (e.g., patient pre-assessment, patient transport, OR team) are both evidence-based and process-driven—and that all are geared to drive successful on-time starts.

ESTABLISH OWNERSHIP OF PRE-ADMISSION TESTING PROCESS

One important step for ensuring first cases start on time is effectively managing pre-surgical tests and consultations. At some hospitals, patients may be asked to arrive at 6:00am for an 8:00am procedure, only for clinical staff to find they need additional lab tests or cardiologist consultations before they can go to the OR. Creating a sense of ownership among your anesthesiology team in managing the pre-assessment



process in a consistent, timely manner can prevent avoidable last-minute delays. Ideally, all pre-admission testing should be done at least 72 hours before surgery. It should be focused on optimizing the patient, which prevents needless case delays or cancellations on the day of surgery.

KEEP IT ROLLING TO MAXIMIZE OR EFFICIENCY

OR turnaround time is paramount to the efficiency of a perioperative program. Properly utilizing an anesthesiology care team model is one way to cut down time between cases when ORs are sitting idle, delaying the surgical schedule. The model utilizes an anesthesiologist along with two or more certified registered nurse anesthetists (CRNAs), allowing the physician to care for more than one patient at a time within the operative suites of the hospital. Managed effectively, this team can streamline OR turnover. This efficiency will not only contribute to surgeon and patient satisfaction, but it could free up time for additional surgical procedures and revenue for the hospital.

FOLLOW THE LEADER

Every anesthesiology program needs a team-oriented clinical leader who takes ownership of the entire perioperative program and works in conjunction with hospital executives, referring surgeons, nurses, support staff and patients. That person, a dedicated medical director, is the conductor of the orchestra. He or she manages the entire day's events. If there are bumps along the way like an emergency case, that person ensures changes are properly managed and integrated into the schedule. The medical director is the main point of contact with all surgical specialties and other stakeholder

groups and is responsible for guiding the monitoring, documentation and review of the anesthesiology team's performance against benchmarked quality and service metrics.

INTEGRATE PAIN MANAGEMENT

Since anesthesiologists have extensive training in pain management, an anesthesiology program should handle the acute and chronic pain management program as a "hospital-based" service. By integrating these functions, you achieve greater efficiency and coordination. Basing the program in the hospital allows you to retain additional revenue from these services.

CONCLUSION

While not an exhaustive list, striving to accomplish a few of these goals should help your hospital improve its OR efficiency. Increasing the efficiency of surgical service can garner higher patient and clinician satisfaction, boost surgeon referrals, help the hospital to be more profitable and be recognized as the facility of choice in your community.

If you would like more information, please contact our Business Development team at business_development@teamhealth.com or visit teamhealth.com/contact.