**TEAM: STRONG SURGICAL CENTER - AMBULATORY SURGICAL CENTER AND 23-HOUR UNITS**

Sandra Price’s challenge was to evaluate current cross-training efforts in the Ambulatory Surgical Center (ASC) and the 23 Hour Units (SD23) which are two units within the Strong Surgical Center’s (SSC) perioperative service. She was interested in this subject as an innovative staffing solution for nursing to alleviate the negative impact of variable patient census, acuity, and workload imbalances to increase nurse competence to safely care for patients within a similar discipline. Within the two departmental silos a larger staffing concern exists. About one-third of the experienced nurses in these two units are approaching retirement ages within the next few years. Cross-training is a strategy that can extend nursing knowledge and expertise. The projected nurse shortage drives the need to be creative with staffing to maximize skills, reduce costs, and increase productivity, which aligns with the University of Rochester Medical Center’s nursing practice strategic plan.

A needs assessment survey was designed and electronically distributed to nurses in the ASC and SD23. A needs assessment survey provides evidence about gaps in knowledge for developing education and training. Nurses voluntarily completed the survey consisting of seven Likert scale closed-questions and six open-questions to explore nurse perception of cross-training experience, barriers, and learning needs. The survey response rate was 83% among the total 23 nurses eligible to participate.

Sandra developed a focus group of six SSC nurses into a coalition, called “Cross-Training Champions.” These champions were essential in leading change, reviewing survey data, developing standardized tools, and precepting nurses to a formal cross-training program.

The survey results showed among the 19 perioperative nurses surveyed (19/23, 83% response rate), (100%, n=19) understood the need for cross-training, (79%, n=15) believed their unit will benefit from cross-training, and (74%, n=14) would like a formal cross-training program.

With these results, Sandra obtained support of the director of perioperative services, SSC nurse manager, and perioperative educators. After receiving their support she designed a formal cross-training program. The program pilot was initiated in the two units to evaluate the effectiveness of nurse cross-training. The cross-training program was implemented to increase nursing knowledge and competence to meet unit staffing needs.

Based on the needs assessment survey, orientation tools were developed to respond to nursing knowledge deficits and learning needs. A self-assessment skills check list allows the nurse and cross-training champion a competency-based approach to enhance nurse education.

Those nurses who participated in the pilot reported a more positive and productive team environment while gaining confidence with new skills and knowledge. The interpersonal relations between units improved and nurses remain eager to cross-train.

