Streamlined Preadmission Testing Reduces Surgery Delays and Same-day Case Cancellations

Sheridan’s ClearPATh protocol is designed to ensure surgical readiness of patients.

Same-day case cancellations cost hospitals millions each year. These cancellations have a ripple effect down to all constituents in the hospital: surgeons’ schedules must be adjusted, anesthesiologists are left idle, and patients are inconvenienced and left waiting after a night of fasting. Surgeries delayed by even a few minutes can have a negative effect in nearly the same way.

Sheridan Healthcare, Inc. understood that coordinated preadmission testing procedures were key to reducing surgery delays and same-day cancellations, so a team of Sheridan anesthesiology leaders collaborated in a year-long process to develop ClearPATh as a solution to this pervasive problem. Vetted by the Perioperative Directors at Brigham & Women's Hospital, a teaching affiliate of Harvard Medical School, ClearPATh is a proprietary preadmission testing program that streamlines the preadmission testing process. It is based on American Society of Anesthesiologists guidelines as well as extensive research and evidence-based medicine.

“When the ClearPATh system is implemented within a hospital’s perioperative process, surgeon satisfaction significantly improves,” explained Dr. Adam Blomberg, vice chief of anesthesiology for Memorial Regional Hospital in Hollywood, Fla. “More of a surgeon’s procedures actually take place when they are scheduled and they start on time, all due to careful planning and preparation before the patient even enters the operating room.”

In the past, surgeons would order as many tests as possible prior to surgery: full blood work panels, EKGs and x-rays, with the idea that if the anesthesiologist had all that information, the case would not be cancelled. What evidence shows, however, is that unnecessary testing increases costs, particularly for insurance companies, and increases patient dissatisfaction. Patients not only have to travel to several locations for tests but can be denied surgery due to false positives, which happen in otherwise healthy patients. In this manner, ClearPATh helps to verify surgical readiness, schedule only necessary preoperative visits, communicate proper patient instructions for same-day surgery and ensure that all proper, relevant tests are completed.

The patient-centric approach takes each patient’s medical history into account to eliminate these unnecessary tests. ClearPATh includes guidelines and algorithms for high-, medium- and low-risk procedures cross-referenced with high-, medium- and low-risk patients based on the patient’s own medical history. This guidance enables the surgeon to order specific tests for each patient, instead of the same battery of tests for every patient receiving a particular surgery. This patient-centric approach to testing significantly decreases false positives that could delay or cancel surgery.

ClearPATh also stresses the need for pre-admission testing well before the day of the procedure. This allows the surgeon and anesthesiologist to review and coordinate care prior to the procedure so that resources can be allocated properly. These open lines of communication not only improve OR efficiency and ensure that the OR is booked accordingly but also provide patients with care better tailored to their situation.

Surgeries can account for 60 percent of a hospital’s revenue, and these case cancellations and delays significantly eat into the bottom line as unused operating rooms cost hospitals upwards of $80 per minute. ClearPATh has already decreased same-day cancellations, increased on-time starts and maximized operating room efficiency for many hospitals since its rollout in late 2013. In particular, one hospital has already decreased cancellation rates from 8.7 percent to 3.3 percent since ClearPATh’s introduction.

In each of these cases, ClearPATh turns a fragmented system into a coordinated system to save money and provide better care.

The methodology is being rolled out nationally to each of Sheridan’s anesthesiology programs.