

*Voice of the Staff Nurse*

PN (PN) was first introduced to our unit a few years ago by our nurse manager. We are a busy general medicine unit and patient assignments had become increasingly difficult due to varying levels of patient acuity. Our manager had reviewed the literature and presented a summary to our staff at a unit meeting. Initially we were skeptical about what seemed to be a large-scale change. However as time has gone on we have found that PN has been so successful that other units in our hospital are considering adoption.

Following the informational meeting and our unit manager's persistence that PN was exactly what our unit needed, our staff began the work of making this initiative successful. We began to have discussions about what PN meant and the impact it would have on our staff and patients. We talked about the pros and cons to changing our current practice. We talked about how this would impact our work flow as well as the work flow of our assistive personnel. We looked at our unit and decided how to divide the patient rooms into four pods.

There was concern related to workload, specifically how we were going to manage the acuity levels of our patients. Nurses were concerned that the acuity levels could vary greatly from pod to pod and this could negatively impact the care we provide. There were also concerns related to the idea of a pod partner. Initially nurses were apprehensive about being paired with another nurse that they did not choose. Although these were valid concerns we agreed that in order to be successful, we needed to fully embrace the guidelines of PN as an entire unit.

I was fortunate enough to have been scheduled on the first day of implementation, and I remember it well. Aside from the usual tension and uncertainty experienced when something new is introduced, things went smoothly.

Initially what I noticed was not the impact PN had on our patients, but the impact it had on me. At the end of my shift that day, I was tired but not physically exhausted. For years I had become accustomed to walking the length of 10 and sometimes 12 patient rooms. (I remember a fellow nurse telling me once that her pedometer showed that she had walked 10 miles during a busy 12 hour shift.) Once PN was implemented my patients were consolidated to the length of 6 patient rooms. This greatly reduced the amount of time I spent walking and increased the time I could spend with my patients.

As time has gone on I have noticed the positive impact PN has had on our unit. Our charge nurse role was made a little easier. The patient assignments were now consolidated into four separate pods as opposed to an entire unit. Although acuity does vary from pod to pod and can be higher in some pods than others, we have learned to adjust as

a unit. When a pod is found to have a higher acuity, our charge nurse is able to focus on one pod, helping one or two nurses with their workload, as opposed to entire area with several nurses.

In regards to the impact PN has had on patient care, the most noticeable impact is the visibility and availability of the assigned nurse. Because the patients are consolidated to one pod, the nurse spends the majority of the shift in that pod and is more readily available to the patients. In addition, pod partners briefly share pertinent information related to their patients. Information shared between pod partners might include: acuity level, tests and procedures, blood products, security concerns, isolation status and high risk medications. It has shown to be helpful when pod partners communicate well and are aware of one another's workload, especially in an emergency situation.

Initially, PN was a challenge for our staff to fully embrace. We found it tempting to overlap the pods to accommodate the nurses or to account for patient acuity, including admissions and discharges. Initially we found it was helpful to be very strict in following the guidelines for PN. I believe that was the key to our success. Had we allowed one another to deviate from the guidelines we would not have been able to fully appreciate how effective PN has been. Our unit has been working as a PN unit for a few years now. It would not have been successful if we did not have the full commitment of our entire staff, and the continued support of our leadership team. I am grateful for the success of this initiative and the impact it has had on our unit.