Solution: Keeping Each Patient Safe (From Unrecognized Sleep Apnea)

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IDENTIFICATION:
It was noted that some post-operative patients were experiencing post-operative oxygen desaturation.

This was picked up during a routine review of Rapid Response Team statistics from one of our inpatient units. Upon closer review, three of fourteen patients exhibited signs and symptoms of sleep apnea that had previously gone unnoticed.

PROCESS:
A multidisciplinary group was formed, including anesthesia, respiratory care, and nursing with physician input. We reviewed the latest evidence and guidelines for patients with sleep apnea. A process was developed for assessment and management of these patients.

SOLUTION:
A process was developed to assist with identification of persons who might be undiagnosed sleep apnea patients. Several questions were added to the nursing assessment database. Positive response to these questions will trigger an assessment by Respiratory Care Department, using tools adapted from the American Society of Anesthesia guidelines. Depending on the findings, the patients will be monitored postoperatively, with possible application of CPAP technology.

This process will be implemented in the early days of February, due to delay in procuring adequate monitoring. We will have several months of preliminary data to present by April 2, 2009.

We will review the process periodically to monitor results of this protocol.