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Rapid Recovery Unit

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In response to limited inpatient beds and the bottleneck of flow from the operating room to nursing units, the Perioperative team innovated a process that has never been done before within the post-anesthesia care unit (PACU) setting. PACU care was divided into two levels, with the first being traditional PACU care and the second being focused on care for patients who would be transferred to ICU/IMU after surgical recovery. The unit created to provide this high level of surgical recovery is called the Rapid Recovery Unit (RRU). The RRU accelerates patient flow while providing safe recovery for post-surgical patients with a higher level of care for a short period of time. The RRU officially opened March of 2020 as a response to hospital bed capacity. This space is part of PreOp and PACU, and currently is licensed under the COVID hospital space waver. Since opening, the RRU has helped offload volume directly recovering and caring for patients who are ICU and IMU level of care right after surgery. This frees up a bed for other patients needing a longer ICU or IMU stay.

The nurses who work in the RRU are Intensive Care Unit (ICU) nurses cross-trained to post-surgical recovery. The staff care for a wide variety of surgical specialties including Ortho-Spine, Ortho-Oncology, Surgical Oncology, Urology, IR/IP/Neuro, Gyn/Gyn-Oncology, Plastics, Colorectal, ENT, and Vascular. Since the RRU is part of PACU, the ratio remains 1:1 or 1:2,

which means it is perfect for patients requiring hemodynamic monitoring, q1 hour neuro monitoring, and invasive and noninvasive ventilation, as well as any necessary drip titration.

With the highly skilled nursing care, and an Anesthesia Critical Care Provider on 24 hours day, the RRU can provide a unique place for patients to heal after surgery. The creation and growth of this unit has also improved safety and efficiency for surgical patients by reducing PACU to room holds and delaying ICU/IMU care. In November of 2022, the RRU grew from a 6-bed unit to a 12-bed unit. By doing this, the RRU saved 720 hours of time where patients waited in the PACU for an ICU/IMU bed. Holding patients in PACU also causes delays in the OR schedule due to PACU bed availability. Finally, in January the RRU had 99% of patients discharged by 12:30!

As the RRU settles into an operational business standard instead of a temporary solution to a bed shortage, the team looks forward to: expanding our full-time nursing and CCP staff; utilizing a new orientation process, including specialized education for nurses by the providers; and encouraging RRU members complete their CNIII.



Michele Carson, MSN, CNL, CNS

has been the Manager of Perioperative Services at JMC for 1 year, but part of UCSDH for 18 years. She received her MSN as a Clinical Nurse Leader from USD and Clinical Nurse Specialist from Point Loma. She has 10 years of leadership experience and 2 years of regulatory experience. Outside of work, Michele enjoys reading, art, and skiing or hiking with her family.



Night Shift RRU team: Back row, left to right: Rod RN, Nina RN, Ria RN, Cory RN, Cassie RN, Rebecca RN, Justin RN
Front row, left to right front row: Kim RN, Alina RN, Skylar RN



Day Shift RRU team: left to right: Niecel NP, Grace RN, Ruby RN, Haley RN, Chelsea RN, and Angela RN



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