

## Pre-surgery screening project paves way for standardized procedure

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*Dr. Karen Wong, Nanaimo Regional General Hospital anesthesiologist.*

Working in the operating room at Nanaimo Regional General Hospital, anesthesiologist Dr. Karen Wong saw an opportunity to improve patient care. By working with the Physician Quality Improvement initiative, Karen and her team have made great progress towards more efficient, patient-centered surgical care.

Physician Quality Improvement is the result of the collaboration between Doctors of BC, the Ministry of Health and Island Health. Interested physicians sign-up for one year of quality improvement workshops and lead a quality improvement project. These projects are varied - 2016 cohort projects range from palliative care procedures to improving pneumococcal immunization rates.

Currently, there is a province-wide effort to improve surgical care, and pre-surgical preparation is a key component of this. At NRGH, there is a lack of standardized assessment and education process for patients coming for scheduled outpatient surgeries. This is a problem as the aging population often has multiple medical conditions or diseases that health-care teams need to be aware of in advance. Without a standardized process to prepare patients adequately beforehand, the result is unnecessary delays and even cancellations on the day of surgery.

Karen and her team developed a patient questionnaire, a screening guide to help triage patients pre-operatively, and a patient education brochure. Arrangements were also made for patients to receive pre-operative phone calls from the NRGH nursing staff to clarify medication and discharge home instructions. During this trial period, participating patients were tracked and evaluations were performed regularly with nursing staff, patients and surgeons' office assistants.

Results from the project show that the standardized process effectively triages high-risk patients and that regular engagement between health-care teams as well as patients helps identify problems and improves workflow. Importantly, from filling out the questionnaire at their surgeon's office, to coming in for their surgery, patients responded positively to this new process.

Karen looks forward to ultimately expanding pre-surgical screening to all NRGH surgical specialties and work together with her peers in South and North Island to standardize the process for all of Island Health.

Physicians interested in PQI should reach out to PQI manager, Carolyn Carlson ([PQI@viha.ca](mailto:PQI@viha.ca) 250-331-8626) for more information. Physicians are always encouraged to reach out about potential projects.