Decreasing Opioid Use after Scheduled Cesarean Section

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Successfully decreased the use of opioids from 80% to 40% of mothers post scheduled cesarean section at Northwestern Medicine Huntley Hospital. This was accomplished by implementing a new procedure to advance recovery and decrease pain.

BACKGROUND

The Problem
- Prescribing opioids is common practice post cesarean section. Opioid use in the United States has greatly risen in the past few years with opioid use disorder increasing 333% among delivered patients.
- This is important because the use of opioids by new mothers can quickly lead to maternal addiction negatively impacting future pregnancies and neonates.

Previous Opioid Use
- Norco 5/325mg 1-2 tablets was routinely prescribed at Northwestern Medicine Huntley Hospital every 4 hours PRN for pain management.
- From July 2019 through March 2020 an average of 80% of mothers used opioids during their hospital stay post scheduled cesarean section.

The Root Causes
- Complacency among obstetric physicians and nurses with maintaining the status quo and current post surgical practices
- Lack of awareness regarding increased opioid use in obstetrics leading to future addiction and abuse in mothers
- Unfamiliarity with potential negative consequences in newborns

Barriers
- Lack of time to investigate the latest evidence-based practice
- Misunderstanding related to benefits of enhanced recovery
- Time needed for physicians and nurses to communicate with patients regarding new pre and post surgical practices

METHODS

The New Process
- New interventions were implemented after scheduled cesarean sections to enhance recovery of patients
- Improved recovery of patients will reduce pain and lead to decreased opioid use
- Updated pain procedure implemented including drinking Gatorade, chewing gum, advancing diet as tolerated, scheduled Tylenol Extra Strength, and early removal of Foley catheter with ambulation
- Patient education provided 1-2 days prior to surgery regarding new process
- Checklist created for nursing staff to audit implementation of new interventions to ensure enhanced recovery of patients leading to less pain and decreased opioid use

RESULTS

- By June 2020 the average percentage of mothers who used opioids during their hospital stay post scheduled cesarean section decreased from 80% to 40%.
- Decreased opioid use was evident among unscheduled cesarean section patients as well. From July 2019 through March 2020 an average of 81% of mothers used opioids during their hospital stay post unscheduled cesarean section which decreased to 48% by June 2020.

CONCLUSIONS

- Patients along with OB physicians, nurses, and techs were receptive to education and alternative measures for enhanced pain control
- Education of patients and OB staff resulted in enhanced recovery ultimately leading to decreased opioid use in patients on the unit
- Recommendation to create handout that can be distributed to patients in the OB office explaining the new process being utilized for scheduled cesarean sections

REFERENCE