Centralized Scheduling and Volunteer Navigators Improve Patient Flow

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INTRODUCTION: Breast surgery can involve multiple clinical departments and providers. Sutter Roseville Medical Center (SRMC) is an ACoS Accredited Cancer Center with 313 licensed beds. We diagnosed 977 cancers in 2012, 200 (20%) were breast cancers. Of the 200 breast cancers, 51 patients (25%) underwent surgery involving both, dye and/or wire localization and sentinel node injection pre-operatively. To complete these surgeries, the radiology, nuclear medicine, and surgery departments scheduled procedures independently. Surgery start times were changed without interdepartmental communication. Patients were expected to self navigate to each department and procedure, leading to patient and physician dissatisfaction, delays in OR start times, wasted isotopes and increased costs.

OBJECTIVE:
1) Create a central scheduling hub to coordinate all breast cancer surgeries which require interdepartmental collaboration. Coordinate any changes to the surgery schedule between departments and keep patients informed.
2) Create a Volunteer Navigator program to escort patients and their significant others to each department in a timely manner.
3) Volunteer Navigators provide emotional support on day of surgery, with improved patient experience.

METHODS: The Breast Health Center leadership met with Nuclear Medicine, Radiology, and Surgeon physicians and office staff. A working group was established with the key stake holders from each department. This group created a new scheduling process, required forms and the necessary communication guidelines to assure successful scheduling. An Auxiliary/Volunteer job description was created for the Volunteer Breast Patient Navigator position. Navigators received 8 hours of orientation, including sequence of therapies, geographic location of departments and patient emotional support.

RESULTS: A Central hub for breast surgery scheduling was created. Ancillary departments are coordinated and communication guidelines are followed. A Volunteer Breast Patient Navigator is present for every breast cancer surgery patient needing multiple pre-op procedures. We have improved the patient care and physician experience as well as minimized surgical delays. Since inception, zero isotopes have been wasted and surgery delays due to coordination of care have decreased by 60%.