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Michelle Chan  
*Dominican University of California*

Kelsie Colombini  
*Dominican University of California*

Kristen M. Henderson  
*Dominican University of California*

Courtney Malachowski  
*Dominican University of California*

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**Occupational Therapy in the Intensive Care Unit**

**Michelle Chan, Kelsie Colombini, Kristen Henderson, & Courtney Malachowski**

**Faculty Advisor: Kitsum Li, OTD, OTR/L, CSRS**

**Dominican University of California, Department of Occupational Therapy, San Rafael, CA**

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**Introduction**

Hospitals in America are seeing a rise in the number of inpatient cardiac surgeries, increasing from 5,939,000 in 2000 to 7,568,000 in 2010 (Mozaffarian et al., 2015). As more patients require cardiac surgery, occupational therapy services are needed in the intensive care unit (ICU) to facilitate patients’ return to their daily lives. Due to the nature of cardiac surgery, patients’ physical, cognitive, and psychosocial well-being may be affected. Occupational therapists use a holistic approach to healthcare by addressing the entire person. This supports the inclusion of psychosocial interventions for physical, cognitive, and psychosocial factors in the ICU during recovery. Addressing these three factors may promote overall health and well-being, as well as increase participation in meaningful occupations.

**Psychosocial Factors**

Patients that undergo cardiac surgery are at an increased risk for developing depression and anxiety which may have long-lasting symptoms that may negatively impact their quality of life (Paparrigopoulos et al., 2013). Literature has shown the prevalence of depression to be 23% and anxiety to be 45.5% post cardiac surgery (Pirraglia et al., 1999; Tully, Baker, Turnbull, & Winefield, 2006).

Evidence shows patients of undergoing cardiac surgery have 25% more symptoms of depression and anxiety than the patient themselves (Buzen et al. 2007).

To identify impairments in psychosocial functioning, the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS) may be administered to patients. The HADS demonstrates high validity, specificity, and sensitivity to both anxiety and depressive symptoms (Bjelland, Dahl, Haug, & Neckelmann, 2002).

To address anxiety and depression in patients that undergo cardiac surgery, psychosocial education and music therapy are both supported by evidence. Patients and partners who received psychosocial education had decreased anxiety and depression, as well as a significant improvement well-being (Ågren, Berg, Svedjholm, & Stromberg, 2015). Implementing music therapy post cardiac surgery significantly reduced pain and anxiety in patients undergoing cardiac surgery (Sendelback, Halm, Doran, Miller, & Gaillard, 2006).

**Statement of Purpose**

An evidence-based clinical pathway ensures that the most appropriate and effective guidelines, assessments, and interventions are implemented to create consistent and unbiased care, facilitate patients’ return to their highest level of functioning, and improve patients’ overall quality of life. Therefore, the goal of this project was to propose a clinical pathway for the occupational therapy department at the Peninsula Medical Center, located in Burlingame, CA. The proposed clinical pathway addresses common physical, cognitive, and psychosocial factors that may arise in patients post cardiac surgery during their stay in the ICU and step-down unit.

**Clinical Pathway for Intensive Care Unit**

The purpose of the proposed occupational therapy evidence-based clinical pathway at Mills-Peninsula Medical Center is to provide a clinical guide for occupational therapists interested in developing a clinical pathway for patients post cardiac surgery on the intensive care and step-down units. The clinical pathway addresses common physical, cognitive, and psychosocial factors that may arise in patients post cardiac surgery and creates a standard for consistent and effective treatment.

**Clinical Pathway**

**Day 1**

**Clinical Education**

- Occupational therapy orientation
- Orientation to patient goals
- Assessing the patient’s current needs
- Behavioral changes (discharge)
- Early mobilization

**Educational**

- Pain
- Oxygen therapy
- Management of chest tubes

**Day 2**

**Clinical Education**

- Essential outcomes related to recovery
- Reviewing patient’s goals
- Assessing the patient’s current needs

**Educational**

- Discharge planning
- Psychosocial education

**Day 3**

**Clinical Education**

- Discharge planning
- Psychosocial education
- Reviewing patient’s goals
- Assessing the patient’s current needs

**Educational**

- Discharge planning
- Psychosocial education

**Guidelines**

1. Follow standardized guideline parameters (e.g., scales from Cardiac surgery)
2. Apply mobility index score on and off the bed
3. Apply pain scores on and off the bed
4. Maintain optimal rest and mobilization
5. Maintain optimal nutrition and hydration
6. Maintain optimal physical therapy
7. Maintain optimal occupational therapy
8. Maintain optimal speech therapy
9. Maintain optimal pharmacological therapy

**Day 4**

**Clinical Education**

- Discharge planning
- Psychosocial education
- Reviewing patient’s goals
- Assessing the patient’s current needs

**Educational**

- Discharge planning
- Psychosocial education

**Cognitive Factors**

Early identification of mild cognitive impairment (MCI) in patients that undergo cardiac surgery should occur prior to discharge from acute care. In a longitudinal study that followed 261 patients post coronary artery bypass graft (CABG), the incidence of cognitive decline was 53% at discharge, 36% at six weeks after surgery, 24% at six months after surgery, and 42% at five years after surgery (Neves et al., 2010). Amongst these factors, MCI has been found to predict MCI occurring in patients post CABG experienced impairments in attention and working memory during an on-the-road test. Ayuk, Alyuray, Guzelegolu, Baysak, and Hazan (2013) found that patients post CABG experienced noncompliance with respiratory exercises, difficulty concentrating, and difficulty learning management of inhalers as a result of MCI. Both studies demonstrate the significant impact MCI has on safety.

Cameron, Carter, Page, Stewart, & Ski (2013) compared the Mini Mental State Exam (MMSE) and the Montreal Cognitive Assessment (MoCA) and found that the MoCA classifies 4.1% of patients with heart failure as cognitively impaired that were not classified as having MCI by the MMSE.

**Physical Factors**

The inclusion of early mobilization in occupational therapy intervention for patients post cardiac surgery in the ICU is supported by current literature. Studies show early mobilization may reduce the effects of disuse muscle atrophy by maintaining or improving patients functional participation, endurance, and muscle strength (Citerio et al., 2015; Fan, 2012; Nordon-Craft et al., 2012). The progression of early mobilization in the ICU may be guided by Metabolic Equivalent of Task (vit) guidelines. (Joo et al., 2014; Preston & Fytton, 2010; Savage, Toh, & Aldes, 2007).

Sternal instability may result in pain that limits patients’ ability to perform daily tasks (El-Ansary, Waddington, & Adams, 2007; Kun & Xibun, 2009; Oubreth et al., 2006; Tuyt, Mackney, & Johnstone, 2012). To address this concern, this project supports the inclusion of thoracic exercises and precautionary sternal precautions to facilitate proper healing of the sternum and return patients to occupational participation (Brocki, Thorup, & Andreasen, 2010; Cahanlin et al., 2011; Sturgess, Denehy, Tully, & El-Ansary, 2014).