

Pediatric code carts puts essential tools at fingertips

LOWELL GENERAL HOSPITAL

The emergency departments at Lowell General Hospital's Main and Saints Campuses have Emergency Medicine and Surgical specialists available around-the-clock to care for patients experiencing serious acute illness and traumatic injuries.

Challenge

Pediatric code events are rare at Lowell General but when they do occur, the emergency medicine team must act quickly. Additional time spent hunting and fetching specialized tools and materials may cost valuable time.

Action

In order to reduce the need for complex medication calculations and to eliminate "hunting and fetching" for tools and materials in the event of a pediatric code event, Lowell General Hospital implemented a standardized pediatric code cart in their Main Campus and Saints Campus emergency departments. The project was initiated by the hospital's Code Committee, which recognized the need to "slim down" and standardize the pediatric code carts across the two hospital campuses. The project team included members from the inpatient pediatric team in addition to those on the Code Committee.

The revamped carts include everything that a team might need during a pediatric code event. There are laryngoscopes, a drill for easy intraosseous access, fluids, LMAs, tubes, nasal trumpets, oral airways and suction catheters by size. In addition to these critical tools and materials, there is also a Broselow card and book with each cart to help with complex medication calculations that need to be done to ensure proper

weight-based dosing of pediatric patients. The dosing materials include medication dosing in milligrams and milliliters, and serves as a way to double-check calculations, especially with the very small doses that are needed for infants and toddlers. This easy reference radically reduces the risk that a medication error will occur during these time-pressured events.

Lessons learned

Training and simulations using the pediatric code cart are key to ensuring they are used effectively during a code event. Since pediatric code events are rare, it is important to make sure that staff are oriented to the carts and familiar with what is in them. Lowell General's training includes a "tour" of the cart so that staff is oriented to its contents. They also have an "open" cart available so it's easier to see what's in the cart during training. Regular use of the cart during simulation can also help increase familiarity.