Decreasing the Incidence of Corneal Abrasions in Recovery

PURPOSE
The purpose of this scholarly project was to implement an ocular protection guideline for registered nurses (RNs) caring for patients recovering from anesthesia in the postoperative care unit (PACU) in order to improve ocular care and decrease the incidence of corneal abrasions (CAs).

BACKGROUND
The project was implemented in an outpatient community surgical center. Their baseline incidence rate of CAs was 0.17%. The national average is 0.03 – 0.17% (Palte, 2018).

METHODOLOGY
Surveys of PACU staff were conducted prior to project implementation to evaluate ocular protection techniques and knowledge. A guideline was created based on survey results, input from key stakeholders, and a literature review on ocular protection. Staff were educated on the guideline prior to implementation. Changes to the program were employed according to the Plan-Do-Study-Act quality improvement method. Post implementation data collection included staff observation using an audit tool to evaluate if PACU RNs were following the guideline and the incidence of CAs.

RESULTS
Post implementation the incidence rate of CAs was 0%, which exceeded the goal of decreasing the incidence rate to 0.03%. Staff adherence to the ocular protection guideline was 89% which also exceeded the goal of 75%.

IMPLICATIONS
Standardizing ocular protection techniques in PACU can contribute to decreasing the incidence of CAs for patients recovering from anesthesia. Corneal abrasions can occur anytime during the perioperative period. Therefore prevention of CAs is optimized when all providers involved are educated and actively engaged in CA prevention.