



DNR in the OR

Perioperative Code Status Discussion for Patients with Active DNR/DNI Orders Undergoing Surgery or Procedure

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Background

Resuscitation and ventilation have been the focus of study since ancient times. We, as anesthesiologists, care a great deal about resuscitation. However, approximately 8% of adults over age 65 have an active DNR order. This creates challenges for anesthesia providers, with some states having documented “wrongful life” lawsuits. Patients are undergoing more procedures than ever, sometimes for palliative reasons. Some of these patients have active DNR orders. It is not always clear to anesthesiologists that a patient has an active DNR order; however, anesthesiologists are responsible for having code status discussion with patients.



Rescue Breathing

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Identifying the Problem

The ASA and ACS have had policies in place since the 1990s regarding patients with DNR orders going to the OR. These policies simply state that patients may decide to reverse or continue their current orders, but a conversation must be had. Institutions have been slow to adopt these policies. Frequent hand-offs of patients can add to confusion concerning a patient’s specific wishes in the operating room. We needed a way to easily identify these patients can document their wishes.

Changes Implemented

- DNR icon added to status board for **admitted** patients with active DNR order
- Addition to pre-operative evaluation note to document DNR discussion
- Addition to surgical pause

	12:34		WVU OR 2 WEST INTRA- OP	Enucleation Eye-Left With Possible Orbital Implant
206	14:24		WVU OR 2W 206	
	75317			

DNR Status

☐ DNR discussed during anesthesia pre evaluation

Additional risks include

☐ Patient wishes to continue DNR status throughout the course of the anesthetic and the post anesthetic period.

☐ Patient wishes to discontinue DNR status throughout the course of the anesthetic and the post anesthetic period. This means that full resuscitative efforts will be made, if necessary.

☐ Patient consents to limited resuscitation during the anesthetic and post anesthetic course according to their preference below

Challenges

Patients presenting for elective, outpatient surgery may have advance directives. Pre-op nurses are generally responsible for asking patients if they have these documents. These can be awkward conversations to have with a patient having an ambulatory surgery. Additionally, ICU patients present a specific challenge because it is unclear when the perioperative period ends. Communication with the patient, surgeon, intensivist, and patient family members are important in these situations.

References

Statement of the American College of Surgeons on Advance Directives by Patients. "Do Not Resuscitate" in the operating room. Bull Am Coll Surg. 1994 Sep;79(9):29. PMID: 10136710.

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<https://www.asahq.org/standards-and-practice-parameters/statement-on-ethical-guidelines-for-the-anesthesia-care-of-patients-with-do-not-resuscitate-orders>