PREPARING RESIDENTS FOR BEHAVIORAL CODES:
A quality improvement initiative

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AIM: To increase resident knowledge & comfort with behavioral codes, including use of restraints and appropriate first-line behavioral medications, by May 2019.

**background**

Behavioral codes—called when a patient is exhibiting abusive or threatening behavior—can be challenging for patients, family, and staff. Residents face difficult questions, including how to try to verbally deescalate a situation, what medications to choose, and when restraints are appropriate.

We created a quality improvement initiative aimed to enhance resident knowledge and comfort surrounding behavioral codes on the pediatric wards.

**methods**

A code card was created with the help of faculty and a multidisciplinary team to provide a fast resource for residents during behavioral codes. The card includes tips on when to call a code, pearls for verbal de-escalation, medication options, and when to order restraints. A dot phrase was created to encourage and improve code documentation. We sent out PDFs of the code card to the current pediatric and med-peds residents, and surveyed their initial responses.

**conclusions**

The code card was a helpful tool to improve resident knowledge and comfort with behavioral codes.

**possible future directions**

- Develop a behavioral code simulation to give residents a chance to practice
- Create a template for an escalation plan for patients likely to trigger behavioral codes
- Create additional resources for other team members involved in a code, such as nurses
- Analyze pre- and post-intervention data in Epic to compare use of appropriate first line medications or change in need for restraints

**special thanks**

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