POLICY: Transitions of Care and Handoffs

I. Purpose:
To promote quality of care and patient safety during transitions of care and handoffs for patients.

All UCSF Fresno medical education training programs must have a policy in place to ensure the quality and safety of patient care when transfer of responsibility occurs during duty hour shift changes and other scheduled care transitions or when unexpected circumstances arise during the care of patients.

II. Definition:
A handoff is defined as the communication of information to support the transfer of care and responsibility for a patient/group of patients from one provider or team of providers to another. The transition/handoff process is an interactive communication process of passing specific, essential patient information from one caregiver or team to another.

III. Policy:
UCSF Fresno follows the ACGME Common Program Requirements (VI.B.) in which programs must design schedules and clinical assignments to maximize the learning experience for residents/fellows as well as ensure quality care and patient safety, and adhere to general participating site policies concerning transitions of patient care. Programs should also minimize the number of transitions in patient care and develop handoff procedures that are structured and reflect best practices (in-person whenever possible, occur at a time and place with minimal interruptions, etc.).

Programs must monitor effective structured handoff processes to facilitate both continuity of care and patient safety. Programs must ensure that residents are competent in communicating with patient care team members in the handoff process. Program schedules must be available to inform all members of the health care team of attending physicians and residents currently responsible for each patient’s care.

Faculty oversight of the handoff process may occur directly or indirectly, depending on trainee level and experience. All programs should use applicable tools (written or computerized) to assist them in this structured process, for monitoring purposes and to evaluate competency of residents during the transition of patient care.

(Original signed Policy is available in the UCSF Fresno Graduate Medical Education Office)

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