Introduction
Studies report improvement of hospital measured nurse satisfaction, employee turnover, and patient-centered outcomes with use of patient acuity tools (PAT) to evenly distribute patients. Currently there is no standardized method for measuring patient acuity across hospitals which range in patient factors included for case mix index to nursing tasks to written and electronic versions. Fig. 1 is an example of a paper PAT previously used on the med-surg floor at South Campus (SC). The goals of this study are to first evaluate nursing use, perception, and satisfaction after implementation of an electronic PAT linked with Cerner EHR.

Methods
A six item standardized questionnaire was used to evaluate the SC Nursing Staff’s experience with patient acuity tools (Fig 2). Subjects were selected only if they were registered nurses (RN) working on the med surg floors at Banner South Campus Hospital. In total 30 RNs were surveyed. They were observed while filling out the survey, prior to or just after a shift.

Results
83% of the South Campus RN staff report ever using a PAT. 27% report using one in the last 30 days. Table 1 represents the most common barriers reported by the RN staff to using a PAT.

Conclusions
Currently, the majority of RNs surveyed have used a PAT, but in the last month only 27% report using in the last month. The degree of use may be associated with the barriers reported in Table 1 and the precepted usefulness of the tool (Table 3). Once the electronic PAT is implemented, the use and perceptions will be remeasured after 30 days of use. We anticipate higher degree of use with electronic input of PAT data and higher satisfaction base on previous studies with ease-of-use of PAT software.

Further studies should include correlation with Medicare case-mix index, length of stay, patient outcomes and satisfaction compared to published PATs.

Limitations in this study include unanticipated delay of implementation of the PAT, ongoing improvement of new EHR, nurse turnover.

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References

Figure 1. Previous PAT
Figure 2. Survey used
Table 1. Barriers
Table 2. Format
Table 3. Usefulness
Table 4. Patient assignments
Table 4 represents how often in the last 30 days the SC RN staff feels the patient assignments were equally distributed.

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