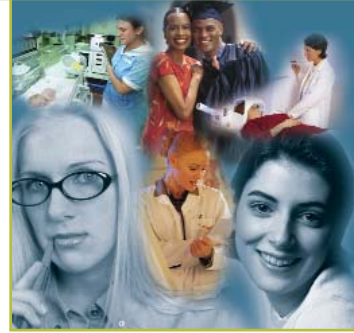


PERIOPERATIVE NURSING



by Lois Belton and Beth Berter

Perioperative nursing will always be an exciting and ever-changing specialty, offering nurses a multitude of rewards...

Perioperative nurses are essential to the delivery of safe patient care in the surgical or invasive procedural setting. A perioperative nurse is a registered nurse who, using the nursing process, develops a

nursing care plan, and coordinates and delivers care to patients undergoing operative or other invasive procedures.”¹ In the past, perioperative nurses were generally viewed as the in hospital intraoperative care provider. With today’s advanced technology, many procedures are now performed as outpatient surgery, in ambulatory surgical settings, radiology departments, and surgeons’ office-based centers.

The two traditional roles in perioperative nursing are scrub nurse and circulating nurse, both of which require knowledge of anatomy and physiology, surgical intervention procedures, and necessary equipment and instrumentation. Either a surgical technician or a registered nurse can fill the scrub nurse role, in which the nurse performs a surgical hand scrub and aseptically dons a surgical gown and gloves. The scrub nurse remains “sterile” and is responsible for directly assisting the surgical team by anticipating and providing the necessary instruments and supplies during the procedure. The circulating nurse, on the other hand, fulfills the nursing role. If the surgeon is the “captain of the ship” the circulating nurse is the

“skipper,” coordinating patient care and case flow of the surgical suite. This role gives nurses autonomy and the opportunity to work with a multidisciplinary team. Other perioperative nurse roles are: certified registered nurse first assistant (CRNFA), specialty service leader, and perioperative nurse specialist.

With perioperative nursing, the nursing process is used to assess, plan, and implement patient care. When assessing patients, the nurse must carefully review the patient’s current and past health history; laboratory values; psychological status; cultural requirements;

sensory and motion impairments; and understanding of procedure. In most cases during an invasive procedure, patients are given anesthesia medications to produce an unconscious state. Patients rely on the perioperative nurse to be their advocate during this time.

Each nursing care plan is revised as necessary throughout the surgical intervention, and typically addresses the following: patient safety (the most crucial), skin integrity, psychological/body image, efficient circulatory/gas exchange, and hypothermia. Health care institutions

worldwide have recently updated and implemented policies to insure that interventions are performed on the correct site, and that the correct procedure is being performed.

Today’s advanced technology also increases the patient’s needs for safety measures, as any equipment and instrumentation can negatively impact a patient’s outcome if not used properly. Perioperative nurses must know how to use a wide variety of various surgical equipment and instrumentation, and quickly, as time is always of the essence. In addition, the perioperative



nurse and surgical team are responsible for successful completion of surgical “counts,” to be sure that the patient does not retain any foreign object after the surgical wound is closed.

Perioperative nurses also assess, plan, and implement alternative patient positioning as needed, and provide warming blankets if needed, as hypothermia is a possible outcome of any surgical procedure.

Perioperative nursing will always be an exciting and ever-changing specialty, offering the nurse a multitude of rewards, including decision-making opportunities, working directly with a multidisciplinary team, and direct patient care one individual at a time. Choosing a career in perioperative opens many doors into the future. ■

resources

www.aorn.org

the web site of AORN, the Association of periOperative Registered Nurses, dedicated to the safe care of perioperative patients.

AORN Journal

One of the most visible benefits of AORN membership, the AORN Journal is an award-winning source of perioperative nursing information. The Journal is published monthly and provides articles on clinical management and research topics; updates on clinical issues, perioperative pharmacology, and OR nursing law and legislation; it also features book reviews, practical innovations, Board and conference reports, and home study programs.

NSNA members can join the Association of PeriOperative Registered Nurses at a special rate. For more information, click on www.aorn.org, or call 303-755-6300.

REFERENCES

1. Perioperative patient focused model. Recommended Standards, Recommended Practices, and Guidelines. AORN, Inc, pp. 15-18, 2002.



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