



# The New Nurse's

By Diane M. Twedell

# Q & A

Graduating nursing school after years of hard work and stress brings with it a new set of challenges. Here are some common questions new graduate nurses have as they embark on their first professional RN roles.

## **Q What can I expect during and after my orientation to my first RN position?**

**A** Orientation is a means by which nursing staff are introduced to the philosophy, goals, role expectations, guidelines, policies, physical facilities and special services within an organization. Orientation provides initial job training, information and assessment of an individual's ability to fulfill specific responsibilities. As you begin your new role as RN, you should be assigned a preceptor(s) who will guide you through the orientation process.

You will participate in both classroom and clinical practice activities throughout your orientation. Depending on the care setting that you work in, you may work a

variety of shifts and work across different types of patient care units.

## **Q What does JCAHO (Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations) accreditation mean?**

**A** "The Joint Commission on Accreditation of HealthCare Organizations accredits nearly 15,000 healthcare organizations and programs in the United States" (*Facts about The Joint Commission*, see section under Mission). This is an independent, not-for-profit organization that sets standards that focus on improving the quality and safety of care provided by healthcare organizations. The JCAHO accreditation signals a level of quality that reflects an

organization's commitment to meeting performance standards.

Accreditation serves an important purpose of performance improvement and is voluntary. The emphasis is on what an organization is doing right and how it can improve.

## **Q What is my role in JCAHO accreditation as a staff nurse?**

**A** Nurses play an important role in JCAHO surveys. The JCAHO uses a patient tracer method that drives the survey process. Surveyors select certain patient-charts and "trace" those patients' care throughout the organization, questioning nursing staff who care for them. The most important thing you can do is to articulate the nursing care you provide for your patients each and every day. The surveyors will ask questions, and in your role as a staff nurse, you should be knowledgeable of the JCAHO standards and what is required in your role. The surveyors want to know what nurses do everyday and information that you provide to JCAHO can help improve practice and quality patient care. As you begin your career, you will continuously be

updated on what is required for JCAHO and for quality care.

### Q What is an “unannounced JCAHO survey”?

A JCAHO conducts unannounced surveys to “enhance the credibility of the accreditation process and to ensure that surveyors observe organization performance under normal circumstances” (*Facts about the unannounced survey process*, 2007). These surveys are never done as an initial survey. Your organization will most likely have already had an initial survey and an unannounced survey occurs in the year your organization is due for another JCAHO survey.

Your organization will not receive an advance notice that JCAHO is coming; thus, it is in essence a surprise. This is why organizations have shifted to a state of continuous readiness in preparation for JCAHO visits.

### Q What is third party reimbursement?

A This is a general term applied to health care benefit payments. Traditionally, in most market transactions, there are only two parties, the consumer and the supplier. However, if you are a member of a benefit plan, “. . . a third party (e.g., government, an insurance company, an employer) is ultimately responsible to pay the costs of services provided to covered persons” (Third party reimbursement, 1993).

Example: If you take an RN position in a healthcare organization, you will most likely receive a benefit plan that includes health insurance, life insurance, and a host of other benefits. The third party reimbursement, as you utilize medical services, will be through your employer or its insurance provider.

### Q What does third party reimbursement mean to staff nurses?

A As an employee, you will find third party reimbursement to be very important to the healthcare organization that you work in. The

amount of reimbursement that a healthcare organization receives from third party payers is critical to the financial bottom line. It will be important for you as you begin your new career to be aware of costs for patient care and be aware of ways in which you can increase quality and decrease costs.

### Q How are standards for nursing practice set and who enforces them?

A The American Nurses Association (ANA) and a variety of specialty organizations set and publish standards for nursing practice. The overall framework of these standards is the nursing process. “Standards of care are established by reviewing your organization’s policy and procedure manual, individual job descriptions, and the practitioner’s education and skills as well as pertinent standards established by professional organizations, journal articles, and standing orders and protocols” (Guido, 2007).

The scope of nursing practice, actions and duties that are allowable by a profession is defined and guided by individual states with a nurse practice act. A state nurse practice act affects all domains of nursing practice. Each nurse practice act establishes a state board of nursing that ensures enforcement of the act and protects the public (Guido, 2007).

### Q How can I get involved in hospital committees?

A You will have many opportunities for involvement in committees in both your professional and personal life. I would recommend that, as you become comfortable in your new role as a nurse, you talk with your preceptor and nurse manager about interests in committees. Ask questions about committees in your workplace during your job interview. Find out from your preceptor and manager what committees are active in your work unit and in your organization. Let committee chairs and members know that you are interested

in their work. Watch newsletters, emails, and informal communication about potential committees. Ask to come to a committee meeting as a guest to observe the work of a committee. There are many opportunities for involvement, don’t be shy....ask questions and volunteer!

### Q What is a clinical career ladder?

A A clinical ladder is an evaluation and advancement system that offers nurses opportunities for clinical advancement, development of specific capabilities and continuing education. A financial reward system goes hand in hand with demonstrated abilities in some organizations. Clinical ladders are utilized to acknowledge advancing clinical expertise. They also reward education, experience, and performance of a registered nurse.

### Q How can I best get to know about the roles of other disciplines that I will be working with such as physicians, physicians’ assistants, laboratory technicians, and physical therapists?

A One of the most important things you can do as a new nurse is to simply introduce yourself and tell individuals you are looking forward to working collaboratively with them. Observe the roles of other health professionals during your orientation. In some institutions, you can elect to shadow another professional to gain insight into another profession. Showing interest in another’s profession is an immediate way to gain rapport.

### Q What is discharge planning and what is the staff nurse’s role in this?

A Discharge planning is the process by which hospitalized patients are provided services and planning in the continuity of care so healing and health maintenance can occur outside of the acute care hospital setting. Every staff nurse plays a role in discharge planning by assessing patients and their needs and beginning to

plan for dismissal from the time the patient is admitted

### Q What is a Magnet Hospital?

A Magnet hospital is one that has been credentialed by the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) to recognize health care organizations that provide nursing excellence. "The Magnet Recognition Program is based on quality indicators and standards of nursing practice as defined in the American Nurses Association's Scope and Standards for Nurse Administrators (2004)" (American Nurses Credentialing Center, 2007).

### Q As a New kid on the block, how do you address concerns with the work environment and co-workers?

A It can be very uncomfortable to speak up when you are the new kid on the block. If you have concerns about the work environment or coworkers, please speak to your

nurse manager or charge nurse on your shift. I think it's important to go forward to your manager with your concerns and also with suggestions for improvements. I have always found it best to talk directly

with the person you have concerns or issues with. If you are nervous about this, talk this through with a trusted mentor or preceptor who can provide you objective feedback. ©

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