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Operating Room Nurses As Teachers

By Netta Cohen RN, BSN, RNFA, CNOR

Are you a nurse or a teacher? Of course, you're both. Teaching can occur as spontaneous answers to questions from our patients or more formal educating.

As a nursing professional, learning is viewed as a lifelong process essential to the growth and development of clinicians striving to deliver high quality patient care. Nurses are permitted and expected to incorporate teaching in all aspects of their practice. Teaching is one activity that reportedly gives nurses a great deal of professional satisfaction. Early Magnet research revealed that staff nurses strongly value their roles as teacher, developer, educator, mentor, leader and supporter. (McClure, 1983).

The UCSD O.R. Nurse is involved in teaching on many levels:

During the new employee orientation nurses take an active role in the shaping of new employees by precepting and mentoring them in their new work environment. We work with the presumption that precepting is everyone's responsibility. Professional development efforts begin with new employee orientation, designed to provide all employees with the knowledge required to navigate through their initial period of entry into the organization. The mission, vision and values of the organization are disseminated through this process. The ability to provide quality patient care, achieve satisfaction in one's practice and advance nursing as a profession is based on the opportunities available to learn from one another. The success of a smooth orientation is supported by the nurse manager, the unit staff and the educator.

Unit Educators and staff nurses

are also involved in coordinating inservices pertaining to new equipment and supplies as well as educating their peers in important competency knowledge. An example is teaching the staff on how to treat patients with Malignant Hyperthermia.

Patients' health literacy includes the ability to understand instructions, doctor's directions and consent forms. Health literacy is not simply the ability to read. It requires a complex group of reading, listening, analytical, and decision-making skills, and the ability to apply these skills to health situations. Decrease in Health literacy has a vulnerable population base which may include: elderly (age 65+), minority and immigrant populations, low income (Approximately half of Medicare/Medicaid recipients read below the fifth-grade level) and people with chronic mental and/or physical health conditions. (Glassman, 2004). Health literacy is an important component of patient education. Nurses in the O.R. are responsible for evaluating patients' comprehension as related to their surgical procedure. Patients with a clear understanding of diagnosis, treatment and recovery are better equipped to cope with illness, make an informed decision and adhere to treatment recommendations. (Glassman, 2004). Patient and family learning needs, including cultural preferences, are assessed upon initial admission to the operating room holding area. Acting



as a patient educator and advocate, the nurse assesses whether the patient and family have a clear understanding of the surgical procedure. Any lack of understanding or misunderstandings are rectified prior to surgery and before preoperative sedation takes effect.

In addition to the above teaching, our nurses also mentor nursing and surgical technician students from area schools. We have an ongoing relationship with San Diego State University School of Nursing, as well as Southwestern College and Concorde College Surgical Tech training program. These students will come for a day of observation or will spend as much as six months in our unit training for their specialty. The precepting staff engages our adult students as active partners in the planning, delivery, and evaluation of their learning. When job openings are available, our students even become potential new hires.

References

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My student experience in the Operating Room

By Deanna Smith, Concorde College Surgical Technologist Student

As I walked through the Main O.R. double doors at UCSD Hillcrest I was eager, energized and anxious all at the same time. It was the first day of my clinical experience as a Surgical Technologist Student and I was fortunate enough to be chosen to be part of such a highly regarded institution. I was unsure of what to expect from my experience.



To my delight, from the time I was introduced to the staff, and throughout my entire stay at UCSD, the Educator, my surgical tech preceptor, and the entire staff were friendly, supportive, and open to my being part of the team. I felt like they really respected me as a student and wanted to ensure that I had the best experience that I possibly could.

My first week in the operating room was intimidating. Some days went perfectly and others not so perfect. But there always was an atmosphere of support and team-building on the floor. I felt comfortable that I could go to any of the staff for advice and direction and that I was a respected member of their team. I was able to learn from every situation I was in.

The surgical technicians and nurses reinforced the education and training that I had received at Concorde College. This provided me with consistency

and a sense of well being. I was delighted to see that the entire staff followed AORN standards for the operating room, which I had learned throughout my classes at Concorde's Surgical Technologist Program. The entire team, from the transport team to the surgeons, showed a high level of patient care and genuine caring for the patient which made me feel like I was gaining the best experience I could.

I felt I had an advantage with the opportunity to have my clinical training at this highly regarded teaching institution. One example is the chance to observe and listen to the Attending Surgeon instruct the Residents on the surgical procedure. The surgeons take great pride in teaching their skills and I was honored to be included in gaining the knowledge they were sharing.

I am confident that my time with the UCSD Peri-Operative team has increased my confidence, skills and knowledge in the surgical technology field and that I am well qualified to be part of an OR team, as I have been taught by the best.

