

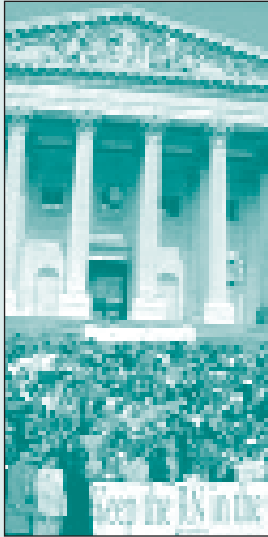
POLICY PROFILE:

The Registered Nurse Circulator



In the operating room, most patients are powerless to make decisions on their own behalf during surgery. The circulating nurse serves as the patient advocate while the patient is least able to care for him or herself. The RN Circulator ensures the patient's safety during this period of vulnerability.

POLICY PROFILE: The Registered Nurse Circulator



THE ISSUE

Ensuring that there is a perioperative registered professional nurse in the role of circulator in the operating room is the top legislative priority of AORN, Association of periOperative Registered Nurses. AORN asserts that it is the right of the patient to receive the highest quality nursing care. No other person is more knowledgeable or qualified to handle the multiple critical issues surrounding patient safety in the operating room than the registered nurse (RN) who is specifically trained in perioperative nursing.

The perioperative RN, through professional and patient-centered expertise, is the primary patient advocate in the operating room and is responsible for monitoring all aspects of the patient's condition. The presence of the RN in the circulating role throughout each surgical procedure is essential for timely delivery of quality surgical care and optimal patient outcomes.



WHO IS AORN?

AORN is the professional association of perioperative registered nurses. AORN's mission is to support RNs in achieving optimal outcomes for patients undergoing operative and other invasive procedures. AORN, as the recognized leader in patient safety, promotes quality patient care by providing its members with education, practice standards, consultation services, and representation. AORN is comprised of over 40,000 perioperative RNs in approximately 6,700 hospitals and 3,500 ambulatory surgical centers in all 50 states and around the world.



WHO IS THE PERIOPERATIVE REGISTERED NURSE?

Perioperative nursing is a specialized area of nursing practice. As a fundamental member of the surgical team, the perioperative RN works in collaboration with other health care professionals including the surgeon, anesthesia provider, surgical assistant, and assistive personnel. The perioperative RN provides expert nursing care to surgical patients before, during, and after surgery. Perioperative nursing requires a unique and highly-developed set of knowledge and skills as well as specialized training and education.

The perioperative RN plans and directs all nursing care for patients undergoing operative and other invasive procedures. The perioperative RN provides high-quality nursing care through patient assessment, diagnosis, outcome identification, planning, implementation, and evaluation. In this role, the perioperative RN is often the single advocate for the patient's safety during surgery.

AORN OFFICIAL STATEMENT

“Statement on One Peri-Operative Registered Nurse Circulator Dedicated to Every Patient Undergoing a Surgical or Other Invasive Procedure”

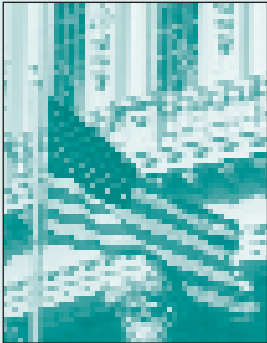
<http://www.aorn.org/about/positions/pdf/POS-Nurse%20Circulator.pdf>

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DEFINITION OF A CIRCULATING NURSE

The circulating nurse's duties in the operating room are performed outside the sterile field. The circulating nurse is responsible for managing all nursing care within the operating room, observing the surgical team from a broad perspective, and assisting the team to create and maintain a safe, comfortable environment for the patient's surgery. The circulating nurse ensures that each member of the surgical team performs in a united effort. One perioperative RN is dedicated to the patient during that patient's entire intra-operative experience. During surgery, most patients are anesthetized or sedated and are powerless to make decisions on their own behalf. By employing their critical thinking, assessment, diagnosing, outcome identification, planning, and evaluation skills, the RN circulator directs the nursing care and coordinates activities of the surgical team for the benefit of patient whose protective reflexes or self-care abilities are compromised by the procedure. These critical nursing functions of the RN circulator are not delegable in the operating room.



EXISTING LEGISLATION AND REGULATIONS

At least thirty-four (34) states have legislative or regulatory language specific to the RN serving in the role of circulator in hospitals, ambulatory surgical centers, or both. Eighteen (18) of these states require that the perioperative RN be present in each operating room throughout each surgical or invasive procedure. Many State Boards of Nursing and the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services affirm through public directives, advisory opinions, practice guidelines, or regulations that the circulating role belongs to the RN.



CONCLUSION

The role of the RN in the perioperative setting is vital to the provision of optimal and safe patient care. The perioperative RN is the health care practitioner with the knowledge, training, and skills to successfully perform circulating duties in the surgical setting. Using sound nursing judgment, critical thinking skills, and interpersonal communications skills, the RN circulator is able to assess and evaluate individual patient needs and to ensure positive patient outcomes. To ensure that patients receive the highest quality and standard of nursing care, it is essential that there is a perioperative registered professional nurse in the role of the circulator throughout every operative or invasive procedure.

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Top Ten Reasons to have an RN circulator in the OR

- 10 Education Grounded in Practice**

The RN has years of didactic and clinical education resulting in a firmly-grounded understanding of all aspects of the perioperative arena beginning in pre-op, continuing through the surgical procedure in the operating room and culminating in post-op.
- 9 Time-Tested Knowledge**

The RN's knowledge of anatomy, physiology and pharmacology are indispensable to the successful treatment of patients, who may present widely-varied conditions.
- 8 Clear Communication Skills**

The unique combination of professionalism, proficiency and perception that define the RN provide the ability to continually interact with all members of the surgical team, resulting in the highest level of care available to the patient.
- 7 Accurate Assessment**

The valuable combination of the RN's formal education, professional training and personal commitment to patient welfare make it possible for them to respond quickly and appropriately to the surgical patient's biological, psychological and social health.
- 6 Critical Thinking**

The RN's qualification and accuracy in recording, interpreting and responding to a continuous stream of data is an essential aspect of the responsibility to serve as the guardian of the patient's well-being.
- 5 Expert Evaluation**

The RN is specifically trained in the practice of accurate perception and decision-making, enabling not only an accurate assessment of the patient's present state, but the capability to plan, implement and continually evaluate that patient's care.
- 4 Skillful Clinical Judgment**

The RN's knowledge, observation and assessment skills, combined with the ability to anticipate needs, are invaluable to the successful performance of the operating room and are crucial components of the coordinated decision-making process that defends the patient's well-being throughout the procedure.
- 3 The Patient's Advocate**

The combination of thorough medical training, enhanced by reading, listening, writing and speaking skills, the RN is the singular position of serving as the patient's primary spokesperson.
- 2 Informed Monitoring**

The RN serves the well-being of the patient as well as the success of the surgical team by acting as the active observer, vigilantly watching for any unforeseen or unintended event that might compromise the patient during the surgery.

...and the number one reason to have a RN as circulator in the OR:

- 1 Patient Safety**

Every surgical patient deserves to have a skilled, trained and knowledgeable professional RN in the operating room with them, acting as the patient's champion and in the patient's best interests when the patient cannot.

Department of Government Affairs

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