

# **AORN Position Statement on Responsibility for Mentoring**

## **INTRODUCTION**

A 2015 survey of perioperative nurses indicated that more than 50% were age 50 or older,<sup>1</sup> and Sherman<sup>2</sup> found that 64% of perioperative nurses she surveyed were planning to retire by 2022, indicating that a significant loss of institutional and specialty knowledge is looming. Thus, there is a need to recruit and retain new nurses to the perioperative specialty.

Mentorship is a strategy that can be used to successfully socialize nurses to practice; prepare them for the professional expectations of the discipline<sup>3-5</sup>; boost confidence<sup>6</sup>; and provide for personal, professional, and intellectual growth and development.<sup>7</sup> Mentors are experienced perioperative nurses who can help novice nurses and nurses new to the perioperative specialty to navigate and thrive in clinical practice, management roles, and leadership opportunities. Mentoring relationships focus on personal and professional growth. This is different than a preceptorship, which is a short-term association during which specific goals, typically related to unit or specialty orientation, are achieved.<sup>4</sup>

The specialty of perioperative nursing is practiced within a setting characterized by rapidly changing technology that requires new perioperative nurses to gain extensive knowledge and skills, as well as by economic and cultural forces that require continuous adaptation. The perioperative setting can be intimidating for new nurses, considering the complicated, diverse, and advanced technology associated with carrying out most surgical procedures.<sup>5,8</sup> In addition, the perioperative setting can be foreign to nurses, since most receive only minimal exposure to the setting in the basic nursing curriculum.<sup>9</sup>

## **POSITION STATEMENT**

AORN believes that perioperative registered nurse (RN) mentors will:

- create a culture that is mutually respectful and inclusive of individual diversity;
- seek to build mutually supportive and strong interprofessional relationships in all areas of practice to facilitate growth and professional development;
- actively engage in opportunities to mentor novice perioperative nurses in clinical practice, inexperienced perioperative nurse managers, emerging leaders in the perioperative nursing milieu, students, and other persons interested in exploring perioperative nursing as a career; and
- model professional behavior and demonstrate a commitment to perioperative nursing by
  - participating in professional organizations,
  - supporting practice-related legislative and regulatory initiatives that affect perioperative nursing practice,
  - maintaining an awareness of global health care issues that affect perioperative nursing, and

- engaging in lifelong learning to advance perioperative nursing knowledge.

## **RATIONALE**

Aging demographics of the current perioperative nursing workforce indicate that the future need for perioperative nurses will exceed the supply.<sup>10</sup> In addition to the demographic challenges, educational needs for perioperative nurses are greater than for generalist nurses, and formal academic nursing programs are often lacking in perioperative nursing content. Despite these challenges, experienced perioperative RNs have the opportunity to encourage interested individuals to enter the perioperative nursing specialty through formal and informal mentoring activities.<sup>11-14</sup> The importance of mentoring in nursing is understood and supported across settings.<sup>3-5,7,8,15-17</sup>

Perioperative RNs entering clinical, management, and leadership roles as well as nursing students seeking to explore the perioperative specialty need role models and formal and informal support and guidance to advance the practice of perioperative nursing. Perioperative RNs have a responsibility to promote active mentoring to strengthen interpersonal relationships and advocate for an environment that promotes recruitment of novice nurses, career development, and professional advancement for nurses within the specialty.

## **Glossary**

*Mentorship*: an intense relationship between a novice and an expert practitioner that promotes role socialization, creates a supportive environment, fills the gap between didactic and real-world experience, and results in ultimate role success of the novice.<sup>18-20</sup> “According to the Academy of Medical-Surgical Nurses, mentoring is a reciprocal and collaborative learning relationship between two, sometimes more, individuals with mutual goals and shared accountability for the outcomes and success of the relationship.”<sup>21</sup>

*Preceptorship*: typically a short-term assignment in which a more experienced nurse assists a more novice nurse to become oriented or acclimated to a unit or specialty practice or to attain specific competencies during transition from nursing school to clinical practice,<sup>14,22</sup> with the end goal that the preceptee will be competent to independently carry out nursing responsibilities.

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