

Strategies for Successful Perioperative Orientation

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JOSEPH K. MOLLOHAN, MSN, RN, CNOR, RNFA, CSSM;
MARIA MORALES, MSN, RN, CPAN

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Purpose/Goal

To provide the learner with knowledge of best practices related to the benefits of perioperative nurse residency programs and successful perioperative orientation strategies.

Objectives

1. Discuss the challenges associated with orienting new nurses to the perioperative specialty.
2. Describe the benefits of perioperative nurse residency programs.
3. Identify strategies for a successful perioperative nursing orientation program.

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JOSEPH K. MOLLOHAN, MSN, RN, CNOR, RNFA, CSSM;
MARIA MORALES, MSN, RN, CPAN

ABSTRACT

The successful orientation of new employees facilitates their transition to the complex and demanding world of perioperative nursing. Whether a nurse is a recent graduate or an experienced nurse who has recently joined the facility or department, a new nurse benefits from a transition period during which new skills, processes, and concepts can be learned. Training should offer new employees the opportunity to develop competency, experience, collegial relationships, clinical judgment, and, overall, specialized knowledge for application in the clinical setting. Concerns surrounding orientation and training include the initial costs for training and the possibility of new employees leaving after the completion of training. The associated costs can be staggering, but adopting perioperative nurse residency programs may be a way to provide quality, high-level training and improve retention rates while minimizing long-term costs. *AORN J* 104 (August 2016) 101-107. © AORN, Inc, 2016. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.aorn.2016.06.002>

Key words: nurse residency, perioperative orientation, training, retention, turnover.

Perioperative nursing is a multifaceted nursing specialty with particular educational needs, and orientation processes vary across perioperative departments. Comprehensive training is needed to equip a new perioperative nurse with the tools needed to begin functioning at full competency. Unit educators must consider available resources and educational goals to provide the best training experiences possible for nurses entering this complex environment. It is essential to provide training during this transition that allows new nurses the opportunity to develop competency in applying recommendations from AORN's *Guidelines for Perioperative Practice*¹ throughout the continuum of perioperative patient care.

Leaders of perioperative units must balance OR staffing needs with the significant expenditure required for perioperative nursing specialty education. The inherent risk of expensive

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orientation programs is that prospective employees will either drop out during orientation or leave soon after completing the program. After facility leaders have expended the resources to orient and develop a new employee, they wish to protect their investment in human capital by retaining that employee. The question remains: what are the best ways to cost-consciously train new perioperative nurses to promote maximal competency and foster retention? This article discusses tools and practices to increase nurse retention and decrease the turnover rates of newly employed perioperative nurses.

CHALLENGES OF PERIOPERATIVE ORIENTATION

With the decline of diploma nursing programs, the opportunity for nursing students and perioperative staff members to interface in a clinical setting has drastically declined. Diploma

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