



Celebrating Excellence in Perioperative Nursing



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This month, from November 10 to 15, we celebrate Perioperative Nurse Week. This event allows us to embrace excellence in perioperative nursing, taking pride in our specialty and all that we accomplish on a daily basis. It also provides us with an opportunity to showcase this work for others to appreciate.

Thirty-five years ago, in 1979, the AORN House of Delegates passed a resolution designating a day each year to educate the public about the role of the perioperative nurse. November 14 was designated OR Nurse Day; a few years later, the observance was expanded to the full week in which that date falls. Perioperative Nurse Week provides an opportunity for perioperative nurses to engage their colleagues, families, the public, and the next generation in the exceptional work performed by perioperative nurses. It is important to celebrate Perioperative Nurse Week for several reasons. First, it promotes recognition for the outstanding work that perioperative nurses do, and it enhances the respect that they receive. Second, it educates others about the unique, critical nature of our work. Lastly, it promotes the specialty as an option for the next generation, encouraging sustainability of highly skilled perioperative nurses in the future.

IMPORTANCE OF RECOGNITION

Recognition has been an integral part of effective nursing leadership for decades because of its link to job satisfaction, employee engagement, retention,

and job performance. Recognition results in employees feeling valued.^{1,2} When people feel valued by their employers, they are more likely to be satisfied and engaged in their work.³ Recognition improves employees' intention to remain employed in the organization.^{2,3} Recognition also elevates self-esteem.^{4,5} When self-esteem is elevated, it enhances self-efficacy, optimism, and resilience, which affect job performance.^{5,6} Meaningful recognition also improves work group cohesiveness.^{7,8} In addition, group cohesiveness promotes effective teamwork, an essential component of patient safety. Recognition is an important strategy because it motivates nurses to provide high-quality, cost-effective care and remain actively engaged in the workplace. Perioperative Nurse Week is one form of recognition during which we celebrate excellence in perioperative nursing.

WAYS TO CELEBRATE EXCELLENCE IN PERIOPERATIVE NURSING

There are many creative ways to showcase the work of perioperative nurses, including engaging colleagues, families, and the next generation of perioperative nurses. We can engage colleagues by sharing improvements in practice and patient feedback as well as by thanking each other. Posting results of quality improvement projects where the results can be seen by perioperative nurses, anesthesia professionals, and surgeons is one easy way to provide meaningful recognition. For example,

when implementing changes to prevent retained surgical sponges, posting the results of the project on a designated bulletin board recognizes the efforts of those nurses who coordinated the project and also all nursing personnel who were involved in implementing the changes. In this way, personnel are engaged in the success of the project and motivated to promote its success. Surgeons who might be aware of the trigger for the project can see the work being done and recognize personnel for making improvements. We should also nominate peers for institutional awards, such as the DAISY Award,⁹ and statewide recognition, such as the 100 Great Iowa Nurses.¹⁰

Perioperative nurses are in a somewhat unique situation in that they seldom know how their patient progresses after surgery. These nurses seldom receive the verbal thanks that nurses on inpatient units receive. Posting patient comments on a bulletin board provides this desperately needed feedback. For example, a patient comment on a satisfaction survey mentioning that the nurse was clearly focused on patient safety and yet took the time to hold her hand during induction of anesthesia inspires everyone to provide the combination of high-tech, high-touch care.

Peer-to-peer recognition is also important, and nurses can be recognized by other team members who catch them doing something right. There are several different ways this can be done. One is by saying thank you. This may sound simple, but consider the significant impact of these words and how much they mean. Some hospitals and ambulatory surgery centers use note cards, similar to business cards, which say, "Thanks for what you do." The cards may have room for writing something specific, or they might be reusable. When receiving the card from a team member, the nurse feels valued. By giving the card to another person,

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the nurse receives the joy of selecting and recognizing another nurse. Team members also can be recognized by a display board where members of the perioperative team can post a note about something someone did well. This could be a simple bulletin board or a themed display. For example, a recognition tree could have notes shaped like leaves that, when completed, fill in the tree, or it might be a butterfly net, labeled "caught doing something right." Notes shaped like butterflies could be placed in the net. The options are limitless.

Another way to recognize nursing staff is by engaging team members' families. Some facilities host a family night and invite staff members' families to see the OR and hear firsthand about perioperative nursing and the importance of this work. One perioperative nurse described the significance of this event to her: "I didn't realize it, but my son thought that when I talked about 'scrubbing,' that I meant scrubbing the floor. He didn't understand why I was needed when I was called in. During family night, he saw what I do and told me how proud he was of me."

We also should continue our efforts to engage the public and demonstrate the importance of perioperative nursing. This might take the form of an invitation to the media to learn about important safety programs in your OR. Consulting with your facility's media specialist can generate ideas of what to showcase. Nurses might invite a legislator to a local chapter meeting, combining recognition with advocacy.

Lastly, we should take this opportunity to engage the next generation of perioperative nurses. The average age of perioperative nurses is more than 50 years old.¹¹ We need to ensure that there is a steady infusion of highly skilled nurses in the future. There are many options for doing this, focusing first on nursing students. Nurses can provide a presentation

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