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## Back to Basics: Positioning the Patient

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#### **Purpose/Goal**

To provide the learner with knowledge specific to positioning the patient in the prone position and preventing positioning injuries.

#### **Objectives**

- 1. Discuss common areas of concern that relate to perioperative best practices.
- 2. Discuss best practices that could enhance safety in the perioperative area.
- 3. Describe implementation of evidence-based practice in relation to perioperative nursing care.

#### Accreditation

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Lisa Spruce, DNP, RN, ACNS, ACNP, ANP, CNOR, and Sharon Van Wicklin, MSN, RN, CNOR, CRNFA, CPSN, PLNC, have no declared affiliations that could be perceived as posing potential conflicts of interest in the publication of this article.

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# Back to Basics: Positioning the Patient

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positioning. Working as a member of the team, the perioperative RN is key to monitoring the process, speaking up when positioning issues need to be addressed, and minimizing the risk of injury to the patient.<sup>1</sup> This article will revisit the basics of placing the patient in the prone position and provide additional resources for perioperative nurses to safely care for patients regardless of the position required. A full discussion of all surgical positions is outside the scope of this article, so the prone position is used as an example.

#### POSITIONING

As technology increases, surgical procedures and their requirements change. New types of surgery,



Positioning the surgical patient requires special attention from the entire surgical team because anesthetized or sedated patients are not able to reposition themselves when needed to relieve discomfort or alert team members of the need for repositioning. Perioperative nurses must pay attention to positioning details and the possibility of injury at all times during the patient's procedure. This includes assessing the patient's circulatory, respiratory, integumentary, musculoskeletal, and neurological structures to help ensure that the patient is properly positioned and safe from injury. Working as a member of the surgical team, the perioperative RN is key to speaking up when positioning issues need to be addressed and helping to minimize the risk of injury to the patient. This "Back to Basics" article discusses positioning the patient in the prone position. *AORN J* 100 (September 2014) 299-303. © AORN, Inc, 2014. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.aorn.2014.06.004

Key words: *positioning, surgical positions, prone position, intraoperative injury, pressure ulcers.* 

ositioning the surgical patient is perhaps one of the most basic concepts that perioperative nurses must understand and incorporate into daily practice. Positioning the patient requires a coordinated effort by the entire perioperative team. It requires special attention, because anesthetized or sedated patients are not able to reposition themselves when needed, and perioperative nurses must pay attention to detail and the possibility of injury at any time during the patient's procedure. In addition to details such as ensuring the patient is correctly positioned and protected from injury, perioperative nurses also must assess the patient's circulatory, respiratory, integumentary, musculoskeletal, and neurological structures during

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