

Standards of Perioperative Nursing

Introduction

AORN is dedicated to enhancing the professionalism of perioperative registered nurses (RNs), promoting standards of perioperative nursing practice to better serve the needs of society, and providing a forum for interaction and exchange of ideas related to perioperative health care. Standards are authoritative statements that describe the responsibilities for which RNs are accountable and that reflect the values and priorities of the profession. The history of the Standards of Perioperative Nursing is detailed in Exhibit A.

As recipients of care, patients are entitled to privacy, confidentiality, personal dignity, and quality health services. The delivery of patient-focused care is guided by ethical, legal, and moral principles. These inherent principles serve as a foundation for perioperative nursing practice and are paramount in achieving optimal patient outcomes.

The standards of perioperative nursing focus on the process of providing nursing care and performing professional role activities. These standards apply to all nurses in the perioperative setting and were developed by AORN using the American Nurses Association's (ANA) scope and standards of practice for nursing and nursing administration as the foundation.^{1,2}

It is the perioperative RN's responsibility to meet these standards, assuming that adequate environmental working conditions and necessary resources are available to support and facilitate the nurse's attainment of these standards. It is the responsibility of health care employers to provide an appropriate environment for nursing practice. It is important to recognize the link between working conditions and the nurse's ability to deliver care.

Several related themes underlie the standards of perioperative nursing. Nursing care must be individualized to meet a patient's unique needs and situation. This care should be provided in the context of disease or injury prevention, health promotion, health restoration, health maintenance, or palliative care. The cultural, racial, and ethnic diversity of the patient always must be taken into account while providing nursing care.

The perioperative RN must respect the patient's goals and preferences in developing and implementing a plan of care. One of nursing's primary responsibilities is patient education; therefore, nurses should provide patients with appropriate information to make informed decisions regarding their care and treatment. It is recognized, however, that some state regulations or institutional policies or procedures may prohibit full disclosure of information to patients.

The perioperative RN's partnership with the patient and other health care providers is recognized in the standards. It is assumed that the nurse will work with other health care providers in a coordinated manner throughout the process of caring for patients undergoing operative or other invasive procedures. The involvement of the patient and designated support person(s) is paramount. The appropriate degree of participation that is expected of the patient, designated support person(s), and other health care providers is determined by the clinical environment and the patient's unique situation.

It is beyond the scope of documents such as these to account for all possible scenarios that the perioperative RN may encounter in practice. The nurse will need to exercise judgment based on education and experience to determine what is appropriate, pertinent, or realistic. Further direction also may be available from documents such as recommended practices, guidelines for care, agency standards, policies, procedures, protocols, and current research findings.

The standards of perioperative nursing provide a mechanism to delineate the responsibilities of RNs engaged in practice in the perioperative setting. These standards serve as the basis for quality monitoring and evaluation systems; databases; regulatory systems; the development and evaluation of nursing service delivery systems and organizational structures; certification activities; job descriptions and performance appraisals; agency policies, procedures, and protocols; and educational offerings. The standards of perioperative nursing are generic and apply to all RNs engaged in perioperative practice, regardless of clinical setting, practice setting, or educational preparation.

A. Perioperative Patient Focused Model

A.1. Conceptual Framework

The Perioperative Patient Focused Model ([Figure 1](#)) is the conceptual framework for perioperative nursing practice and the Perioperative Nursing Data Set (PNDS).³ At the core of the Model, the patient and his or her designated support person(s) provide the focus of perioperative nursing care. Concentric circles expand beyond the patient and designated support person(s) representing the perioperative nursing domains and elements. The Model illustrates the relationship between the patient, designated support person(s), and care provided by the perioperative RN.