
EVOLUTION OF ORNAC STANDARDS OF PRACTICE, COMPETENCIES AND CERTIFICATION

“PERSEVERANCE TO PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE”

Authors:

Gloria Stephens, RN, was an operating room nurse for over forty years. She joined the National Committee for Operating Room Nurses in 1970 and was a member until 1980. She also took on the role of secretary during this time and was the coordinator of the 4th National Committee Meeting (Montreal, 1974) and the 1976 National Conference (Vancouver). Gloria was an original member of the ORNAC Standards Committee and the Chair for the Technical and Competencies section. She was the coordinator of the 10th National Conference (Vancouver, 1988) and went on to serve as the ORNAC President from 1990-1993. During this time Gloria started the first ORNAC Research, Education committees and initiated the ‘Expanded Role of the Operating Room Nurse’ which became the RN 1st Assistant and Assistant to the Anaesthetist. She remained actively involved with ORNAC until 1996 and has donated each year \$1000 for the Gloria Stephens Education Bursary. She was the first to receive the Isabelle Adams Award for excellence. Gloria’s career included; Public Health, VON and surgical ward nursing and mostly known for the OR Program that she conducted at St. Paul’s hospital, Vancouver. Gloria is currently retired and lives in Halifax, NS.

Muriel Shewchuck, RN, BScN, CPN(C), spent over 50 years in the operating room including as a charge nurse, educator, manager, assistant director, director, and consultant. She was, from 1983-1993, a member of several ORNAC Board and Executive Committees. Her involvement with ORNAC included the role as the first Chair of the ORNAC Awards Committee, Chair of the first ORNAC Conference (Jasper, 1984), and Chair of the 1991 ORNAC Conference (Banff). Muriel was also one of the founding members of the ORNAC Standards Committee and remained involved with that committee for 10 years. She was a founding member, and Co-Chair, of Canadian Operating Room Leadership (CORL) Network and was the first CORL representative on the ORNAC Board during which time she made numerous contributions to this Journal (CORL Pearls of Wisdom). Following ‘retirement’ Muriel worked as a part-time consultant in Calgary, AB. Her final contribution to ORNAC was a presentation, along with Gloria Stephens, at the 2017 ORNAC National Conference. Muriel passed away shortly after this conference and is greatly missed by many who’s lives she touched.

This article is based on the presentation given, by the authors, at the ORNAC National Conference, in Niagara Falls, on May 1, 2017. Their presentation included a review of the historical dates, challenges, and strategies, over the first fifteen years of the ORNAC Standards (1983 - 1998) that helped lay the groundwork for where ORNAC is today as a recognized professional organization of Perioperative Nurses.

The term “Operating Room (OR) Nurses is being used in this article since that was the title for decades (prior to the change to “Perioperative” in the mid-1990s).

INTRODUCTION

As early as the early 1900s Operating Room Nurses were recognized as the first hospital ‘specialty’ with their team concept of scrub and circulating roles. Carolyn Hamilton, OR Supervisor at John Hopkins Hospital, devised this concept of the OR nursing specialty and it was later accepted across the United States and in Canada. Education programs were developed to provide the knowledge, skills, and specifics for functioning in an operating room. The

OR nursing role had officially been ‘born’ and continued to grow.

CANADIAN OR NATIONAL COMMITTEE

In the 1960s Canadian OR Nurses in Montreal (Isabelle Adams, Victorie Audet); Toronto (Jean Watson, Faye Trouten); Halifax (Don Carruthers); and the President of the BC Association (Joan Flower) commenced meetings and

formed the National Committee. The first National Committee Conference was held in 1970, in Montreal, with 1200 delegates, and was chaired by Isabelle Adams (for whom today's prestigious ORNAC Award for Excellence is named). Between 1970 and 1982 seven National Committee Conferences were held in Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal, and Halifax. The final National Committee Conference took place in Winnipeg in 1982.

THE BIRTH OF ORNAC – WINNIPEG 1982

The National Committee had remained essentially focused in three large cities with the original members trying to encourage other areas to become involved. The focus and expectations of Canadian OR nurses were changing and there were many new faces who attended the Winnipeg conference and wanted more than a committee. A motion, by Muriel Shewchuk (AB), "To develop a National Organization of Operating Room Nurses with an elected Executive and a Board of representatives from each province" was put forward in Winnipeg. The response to this motion for change was incredibly negative with the main worry being finances.

Much to our delight, however, a publisher, Agnes Forster, called an "emergency meeting of the group" to announce that she would like to start an OR Nursing Journal BUT before this could happen we would need to have a National Organization. Needless to say, common sense prevailed and we were off to the races in our formation of ORNAC. Thanks to Agnes!!

First ORNAC Conference

Muriel Shewchuk (AB) and her team coordinated the first ORNAC National Conference in Jasper, AB, in 1984 and provided the baton to the first President of ORNAC - Valerie Shirreff (ON) – and the inaugural Executive and Board. Many Awards that are still in place today were also established during this conference.

CNA Specialty Groups

Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) had a long-standing list of Specialty Group affiliations of which ORNAC had not been a part. Certification Exams for these Specialties were in the works and so Gloria and Muriel went to a CNA meeting in Ottawa, to ensure OR Nurses could become certified. Much to our dismay we were not recognized as a specialty and so could not even sit at the discussion table. In addition, we were informed that we "... did not have a body of knowledge." Our isolation behind the "green doors", and the perception of us just doing what the surgeon said, was coming back to haunt us – the world did not know what on earth OR nurses do....

Determination and showing our professionalism, knowledge and skills was paramount! Hence our Standards on Professional Practice was a major focus. We set our sights, made major gains (as outlined in the next few sections), and worked toward getting our specialty recognized – and by the early 1990s Perioperative Nursing was a CNA certified nursing specialty.

Courtesy G. Stephens



L to R Gloria Stephens, Muriel Shewchuk, Joan Donald

ESTABLISHING THE STANDARDS

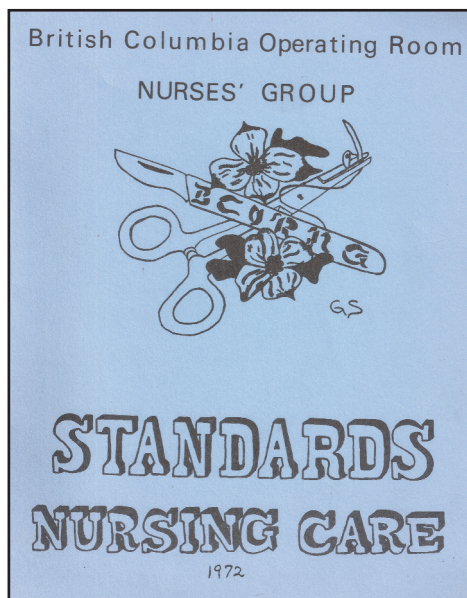
In the early 1970s, Gloria Stephens (BC) attended a program, at Seattle University, on Nursing Process and Standards. Subsequent to this Gloria, and her BCORNG team, published the initial Standards for Operating Room nurses in 1972. In 1973 Gloria received the RNBC Innovative Nurse Award for this publication which St. Paul’s hospital printed and distributed throughout BC and other areas. The content included: philosophy and objectives of OR nursing; the five phases of patient care; and a nursing performance audit as well as how this was to be carried out.

Following BC’s lead, and after hours of intense discussion, the ORNAC Standards Committee began work in 1983, in a major role for ORNAC. The committee was Joan Donald (NB), as Chair, with Gloria Stephens and Muriel Shewchuk. It was a daunting experience with hours and hours of writing and rewriting, with many heavy discussions over every detail before we all agreed.

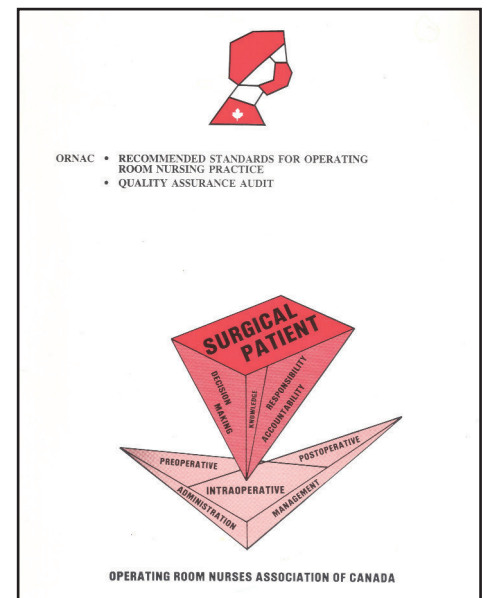
In 1986 the First ORNAC Standards was published, in both English and French, and presented at ORNAC’s

first National Conference in Montreal. BC and Alberta groups funded the project and the cost per booklet to purchase was \$12.00. The title was **“Recommended Standards for Operating Room Nursing Practice & Quality Assurance Audit.”** It included a Conceptual Model (designed by Gloria) and sections on Beliefs, Philosophical Statement, and Standards for Knowledge, Clinical Decision, Professional Responsibility & Accountability, Management, and Administration. The Preface for this was written by then ORNAC President Valerie Shirreff. This document consisted of 45 pages. Gloria developed a slide tape presentation which was sent across the country as a very successful educational tool on implementing the ORNAC Standards. Eva Marie Lessing (MB) joined the Committee in 1986.

In 1988 the Second ORNAC Standards were published for the ORNAC National Conference in Vancouver, BC. This document focused on the Technical Standards section, as an adjunct to the first document, and was re-named ‘Professional Standards’. We had thought that the first document was challenging but this section involved an even more intense



Cover of 1972 BCORNG Standards.



Cover of First ORNAC Standards June 1986

commitment and hours and hours of personal time and lots of travel at our own expense.

To help ORNAC with the financial costs the committee met on weekends at Gloria's home in Vancouver at her long dining room table. Muriel nicknamed it "ORNAC's Confederation Table" and the meetings were often as tough as those involved in getting Confederation accomplished. Gloria developed a new Conceptual Model that combining Professional and Technical Standards. The new standards document contained 135 pages and the Preface was written by ORNAC President Ann Robinson.

For several years the ORNAC Standards were stored in the OR Classroom at St. Paul's Hospital in Vancouver. Gloria received the orders and standards were then sent out by St. Paul's hospital at their own cost (saving ORNAC a considerable sum).

In 1991 the Third ORNAC Standards were created. The two previous documents were reformatted, revised, and combined into one document. Technical Standards were re-named Clinical Standards and the full document was now titled **Recommended Standards for Professional and Clinical Practice.** Gloria assumed the position of Standards Chair with committee members being Ann Hughes (NL), Muriel Shewchuk (AB), and Eva Marie Lessing (MB). A major addition was the development of Competencies – another ground-breaking venture. Five major competencies were developed: Practices Professionally; Provides Physical Patient Care (circulating & scrub roles); Provides Supportive Care (to patients & team members); Provides a Safe Environment; and Responds to Urgent & Emergency situations. The 3rd ORNAC Standards was approved by the Executive and Board in January 1993. The preface for this document was written by ORNAC President Gloria Stephens and divided into two separate sections: Professional and Clinical.



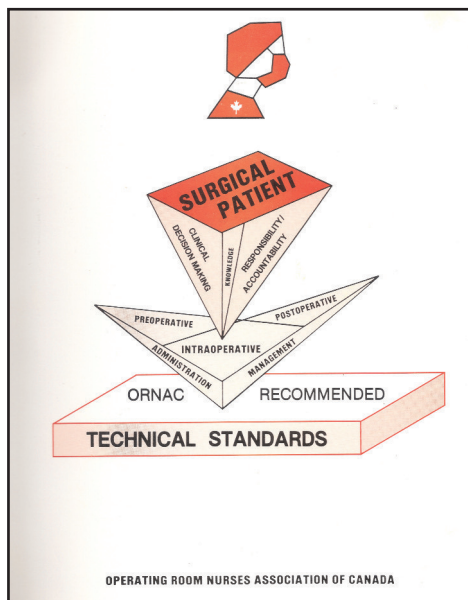
Muriel Shewchuk at work on the ORNAC Standards

Courtesy G. Stephens

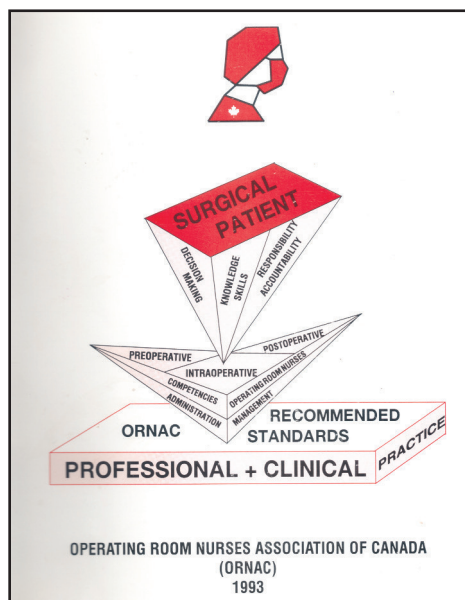
At the Board meeting in Banff in 1992 it was decided, during the strategic planning session, that a 'Scope of Practice' should be added to the Standards. So once again the Standards Committee broke new ground by accepting this challenge. The 'Scope of Practice' was incorporated along with statements on the mission, vision, and values of ORNAC.

All this work was, of course, being done before computers and using a typewriter proficiently was not a skill of any of the committee members. A friend of Gloria's, fortunately, came to the rescue after the first edition and typed the second edition at 'the ORNAC Confederation Table'. This helped once again save ORNAC money. She used to joke that even though she was not a nurse she was an 'Honourary ORNAC Member.'

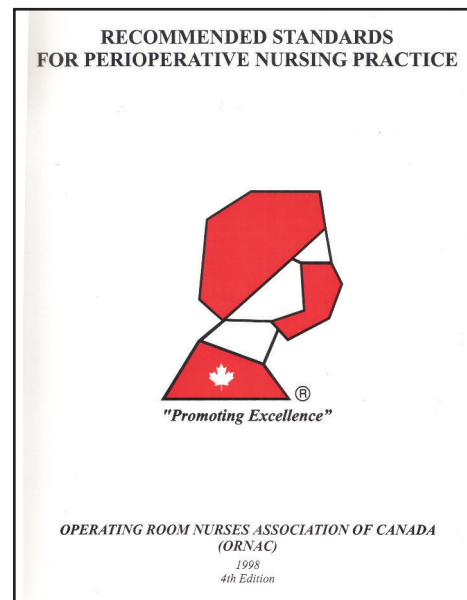
In 1998 the Fourth Edition was released as the "Recommended Standards for Perioperative Nursing Practice." Note the change of terminology from OR Nursing to Perioperative Nursing. In addition, the format of the Standards was changed to consist of Modules that could then be revised in rotation and posted on the ORNAC website when we were seeking recommended changes, additions etc. The cover was also changed and hard copies could now be purchased from the Canadian Standards Association (CSA).



Cover of Second Standards June 1988



Cover of Third Standards 1993



Cover of Fourth Standards 1998

Like the crest of a wave the Standards continue to change with a new chair and committee members in 1998. They were Chair Marlene Hill (PE), Shirley Thorn (MB), Corina Balcom (NB), Lil Budden (NL), and Vija Hay (ON). Corresponding members were Gloria Stephens (BC), Muriel Shewchuk (AB), Sheila Koch (SK), Jane Percy (QC), and Hilda Power (NS). The forward was written by ORNAC President Donna Farid and the section headings were Professional Standards, Competencies, and Clinical Standards.

presented to the ORNAC Board in 1990 by President Gloria Stephens as “If we are to maintain our professional status in the health care system, it is important that the opportunity for certification be made available to OR Nurses of Canada”.

An Ad Hoc committee was formed, to address this goal, in April 1992. It was chaired by Anna Kristoff (AB) and developed a program, in coordination with CNA, that led to the first Perioperative exam in June of 1995. Gloria Stephens served as one of the Certification Exam developers. 500 OR Nurses wrote the first OR Exam and all were successful.

CONCLUSION

It is every Perioperative Nurses’ responsibility to uphold the strength of our nursing specialty by obtaining and maintaining their certification and by nursing according to the values of the ORNAC Standards of Practice. Following 35 years of extensive perseverance the ORNAC Standards continue to be a powerful document for Perioperative Nurses and shall remain as such in the future. 🍁

By: D. McNamara



L to R Muriel Shewchuk and Gloria Stephen at Gloria’s home in 2011. The table they are standing behind is nicknamed the ‘confederation table’ – it was the table on which they worked towards the creation of ORNAC.