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ORNAC's Standards Under Review

By Vija Hay, RN, CPN (C)

In this issue of the Journal there is an article by one of the many excellent speakers at the May, 1995 ORNAC National Conference in Vancouver. The author expresses concern for the operating room nurse as she lists the numerous and potentially dangerous contents of surgical smoke.

Just how serious is the effect of surgical smoke, are we required to evacuate surgical smoke, and do we in fact take measures to evacuate smoke? To find answers to practice issues such as these, we look for guidance in ORNAC's Recommended Clinical Practice Standards for Perioperative Nursing.

Clinical Standard on Laser Safety 9.101 states: "Laser Smoke (plume) shall be evacuated by appropriate systems." The laser plume may pose a health hazard. Clinical Standard on Electrosurgery does not make reference to smoke.

The American Operating Room Nurses 1995 Recommended Practice Standard on Electrosurgery states: "Patients and Operating Room Personnel should be protected from inhaling the smoke generated during electrosurgery". If the laser smoke and electrosurgical smoke are indeed of the same risk, as many people suggest, then the Standard for Laser Surgery could be applied to all electrosurgical procedures.

A new revised edition of the ORNAC Practice Standards is planned for 1998. The ORNAC Standards/Education Committee is aware that to keep current with advances in technology and research, a review process and update of standards has to take place now, and on an on-going basis. For that purpose the Standards/Education Committee at the November, 1995 Board meeting distributed sections of the Clinical Practice Standards for each province to review and comment. Our experts across the country now have an

opportunity to contribute to the Standards document. The comments will be collated, distributed for review, and published as insertions/additions to the 1993 Standards.

Standards are an important component in Perioperative Nursing Certification. The document is a recommended text for exam preparation.

ORNAC is also instrumental in the development of CSA Healthcare Standards. ORNAC members with expertise may be asked to join as working group members on a specific project. Also, you may see familiar ORNAC names listed in the CSA Standards Editions as members of a Technical Committee or a Subcommittee.

In the preface of ORNAC's Recommended Standards, Gloria Stephens writes: "Standards guide nursing practice and facilitate the provision of high quality patient care". It is the Standards/Education Committee's mandate to ensure that the Standards are updated periodically.

To maintain accountability to the consumers, and in keeping with ORNAC's mission statement of being dedicated to the ... "promotion and advancement in perioperative patient care", the Standards/Education Committee is undertaking our Practice Standards review.

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