

values of clients" (p.1).

The rapport established during the pre-op visit can help the patient confirm that the nurse will be his advocate, protector, and caring professional during the time when he/she is unconscious or sedated. The patient at that time is in a powerless position, unable to make a decision concerning his well being. The circulating nurses role is to "control the physical and emotional atmosphere in the room...for the safety and welfare of the patient" (Atkinson, 1992). The tasks of the circulator reinforce the advocacy role and some of these are listed as follows.

1. The circulating nurse provides an atmosphere that is warm and quiet.

2. She/he must insure proper positioning of the patient and have available items to pad and protect bony surfaces, prominent nerves and blood vessels.

3. The circulator must also protect the patient from electrical hazards by using only approved and properly functioning equipment. The importance of proper grounding is also a responsibility of the circulating nurse.

4. As well, respect must be shown for a patient's religious and cultural beliefs and their right to privacy.

5. The circulating nurse is also responsible to have supplies and personnel ready in order that surgical time is as short as possible.

The preceding nursing functions allow the perioperative nurse to follow the obligations of Value XI of the Code. That value states "The nurse advocates the interests of clients" (p.21).

Refusing to care for patients

Nursing is a caring profession and its main focus is on the client and his/her well being. However, the nurse also has established norms, values, and beliefs. These ways of thinking have been developed from birth with religious and societal influences to create a unique person. From time to time a nurse will face situations which are in contrast to norms, values and beliefs of patients and employer.

One issue is that of abortion. Hendrickson and Deloughery (1991) say, "If ethically opposed to abortions, the nurse is usually excluded from participating in activities considered morally repugnant. The nurse should also realize however, that the woman having an abortion has ethical views on the issue that may differ from that of the nurse, and as a person and a patient deserves respectful care" (p.206).

The Code can be used to prevent this dilemma from happening in most cases. This situation can be de-

scribed as ethical distress which according to the Code says occurs when "nurses are ethically obliged to provide particular types of care despite their personal disagreement or discomfort with the course of treatment prescribed" (p. iii). Nurses have the right to refrain from participating in abortions in the facilities where they are performed, due to their beliefs. Value V, of the Code, under limitations says, "A nurse is not ethically obliged to provide requested care when compliance would involve a violation of their moral beliefs" (p. 10). However, the nurse is also obliged to make this known to her employer at the time of employment. The Code also guides the nurse's behaviour according to obligation number 2 of Value V which states, "In seeking or accepting employment, nurses must accurately state their areas of compliance as well as limitations" (p. 9).

Atkinson (1992) also explains that in cases of emergency where the life of a mother is threatened, the nurse could be required to participate. Again the Code is very clear in one of its first statements. Obligation number 1 of Value 1 states, "the client's perceived best interests must be a prime concern of the nurse" (p. 1).

These examples show how perioperative nurses are guided by the Code of Ethics in their workplace. It can help to achieve a balance between what is right and wrong for peace of mind of the nurse and the best interests of the patient.

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Professionalism

By Shirley Gallant, Carol Anne Howe & Donna Wheaton

The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary defines professionalism as:

1. professional quality, character, method or conduct; the stamp of a particular profession.

2. the position of a professional as distinct from an amateur; the class of professionals 1884.

Sec. 63-7-103 of The Tennessee Nurse Practice Act now states that the practice of professional nursing means, "the performance for compensation of any act requiring substantial specialized judgement and skill as the basis for application of the nursing process, in wellness and illness care". The judgement and skill must be based on knowledge of the natural, behavioral and nursing sciences and the humanities.

The term "professional" is much used and much abused. It is both an adjective and a noun applied to every occupation from repairing automobiles to playing football. How often one hears the expression: "He/she is a real professional".

Six major characteristics of a profession as described by Peter M. Blau and Richard W. Scott are:

1. Professional decisions and actions are governed by universal standards that derive from a body of specialized knowledge.

2. Professional expertise is very specialized; problems dealt with are limited to the specialty area.

3. Client relationships are characterized by affective neutrality; i.e., there should be no emotional involvement with the client.

4. Professional status is achieved by individual performance.

5. Professional decisions must not be based on the practitioner's self-interest.

6. The profession controls itself, and external regulation is unnecessary.

Professions must have a service orientation, and the needs of clients should be placed above the

professional's personal desires.

As an occupation moves toward professional status, the occupation is upgraded. Greater income, prestige and power accrue to the professional; and these rewards, in turn, attract higher calibre people into the profession.

Professionalization also leads to the establishment of roles, and with acceptance of the "professional role" come certain preconditioned behaviours that are "expected of the professional".

Professional nursing includes the following:

- responsibly supervising patients, which requires skills, observation of symptoms and reactions, and accurate recording of facts;

- promoting, restoring and maintaining health or preventing illness of others;

- counselling, managing, supervising and teaching others;

- administering medications and treatments as prescribed by a licensed physician, dentist, podiatrist or nurse authorized to prescribe treatment;

- applying nursing procedures that involve understanding of cause and effect; and

- nursing management of illness, injury, or infirmity including identifying patient problems.

Why is professionalism so important to the operating room nurse today? What can we do to foster an image that reflects what the operating room nurse truly stands for?

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The first step in presenting oneself as a professional is having a firm understanding of just what professionalism is. Professionalism requires that a discipline possess its own body of knowledge, that it control its own level of entry and qualifications and that it set its own standards and quality of work.

Professionalism implies such pre-requisites as basic education, the pursuit of on-going education, the ability to understand one's own role and the role of others in the performance of their duties and responsibilities.

Last, but not least, is image. We must be aware of our image, as it is a reflection of all our preparations, experiences and values.

As Mrs. Jeanine Pelland, president of the Order of Nurses of Quebec said, "Image needs to be constantly nourished in order to be renewed. It is in this way that our professional image is renewed".

The Perioperative Nurse and Professionalism

Operating room nurses have been challenged by change. As operating room nurses, we have been called upon to keep abreast of the latest developments in technology and health care. The changes occurred in a number of areas including the following: (1) Education (2) Multi-disciplinary approach (3) Research (4) Quality Assurance (5) The Nurse Consultant (6) Continuing Education (7) Primary nursing (8) Standard Care Plans (9) Staff development (10) Nursing Calendars (11) Evaluation (12) Central orientation (13) Parallel professionals (14) Nursing Grand Rounds, and (15) Problem identification

We, as nurses and professional women of the 90's, must look carefully at the above list and identify those areas where we have to reinforce ourselves collectively and individually on an on-going and regular basis.

As operating room nurses, some of the rewards we share with professionals include:

- (1) Respect by and for colleagues
- (2) A fair salary
- (3) A healthy balance in work and personal life
- (4) Recognition of achievement and opportunities for growth
- (5) Supporting our peers and colleagues involved in regional, provincial and national organizations whose efforts are beneficial to the profession
- (6) On-going education
- (7) Participation in research

(8) Never being satisfied with the status quo

If our goal is to maintain our professionalism, we have to carefully assess our personal and work lives and be aware of ourselves as professionals and individuals on a regular basis.

What approach is to be taken if one is to successfully present oneself as a professional?

In answering this question, we must stress the importance of setting an ultimate goal for ourselves.

We must be very clear in the professional perception of our role, otherwise frustration, conflict of interest and disintegration will occur. We must know not only our own roles, but those of others in order to have a reliable frame of reference.

We must experiment, keep searching and attempt to direct ourselves toward a positive professional potential and we must be committed to the nursing process in order to be more effective in our role.

To be more professional, we must first overcome three unprofessional characteristics: (1) passivity (2) low self-esteem (3) poor unit organization

In our pursuit for professionalism, we should take a close look at the connection between learning and being professional.

Learning is viewed as a lifelong process of adaptation in which effective learning plays a central role. Nursing is a challenge as well as a profession. We must strive personally to develop our careers. We should stay on top of new ideas, technological changes, new procedures and equipment. We must learn to survive in our area of nursing practice.

Maintenance of Professionalism

It is necessary for nurses to continue their education to keep abreast with the advances in the health field today and to meet the demands of a changing society.

We must readily support and promote quality assurance, performance appraisal and reinforce and develop our skills in professional judgement. In our daily performance as operating room nurses, we must be willing to help create a professional and working environment where patient care is carried out according to appropriate sterile techniques performed by a qualified staff who maintain skills profession.

If we believe our skills are going to be developed, we will be more satisfied in our jobs and thus less tendency for discontent in the workplace will be present.

We must make it a personal responsibility to establish a personal development plan for ourselves. We

must update credentialing programs; i.e., CPR - Provincial Registration, I.V. recertification annually in terms of practice domain.

Experiential and educational help support our professional growth. We must readily research activities necessary for continued development through on-going education and monitoring the proper function of equipment.

We must be able and willing to perform our functions and responsibilities competently and responsibly to learn new knowledge and skills that are required in our daily work. We must come to work regularly and punctually. We must be willing to stretch professionally.

Operating room nurses must function as close co-workers. We must form a professional bond with our fellow workers. We must share our knowledge, support our colleagues and upgrade our profession.

We should never assume that we will learn something if we happen to be at the right place at the right time. We must make learning and training our priorities. Better trained nurses can contribute significantly to improved patient care. Options for continued professional growth can increase morale and job retention among staff nurses and nurse managers alike.

Our nursing environment today is one of tradition and history. We have so much to give and so very much to gain.

To maintain our professionalism, we must be assertive, responsible and accountable. We should be active in committees; i.e., Quality Assurance, research, etc. We must develop a business-like professional attitude; i.e., that we are not just doing a job but a professional career and self-choice.

Nursing in the operating room occurs whenever there is a surgical patient who comes to our area for whatever procedure. The nurses in the operating room must act as collaborators to provide quality nursing care with the emphasis on wellness.

Collaboration is the most significant indicator of the evolution of professionalism in nursing. It is absolutely essential for us as operating room nurses.

The sharing of responsibility through collaboration by means of negotiation with nursing colleagues is an absolute must if we are to say we provide quality nursing care in our hospitals. Collaboration with our co-workers can create a positive self-esteem and professional unity in the operating room.

Achieving success in our professionalism must be well planned. How well we implement the intent of any plan directly determines if the outcome will be a

success or a failure. We, as professionals, must enjoy our work. We should be developing our personal growth by improving ourselves daily. We could improve our reading and listening and communication skills. We must invest in ourselves, associate with positive, optimistic people with goals, purpose and a direction in their lives.

We must guard our health. We should be well rested and in good physical shape. We must think of ourselves as professional role models.

Collegiality is a critical factor in achieving the goals of respect and trust. The ability to share and defer judgements are contingent on collegiality. This is essential if we are to reach the highest level of professionalism in the operating room.

Renewal of Professionalism

Nurses, as professionals, need to renew contact with nursing's rich heritage and history. By connecting with that history, nurses could develop a sense of belonging to a continuing process rather than seeing only their particular moment in the development of the profession.

A positive self-concept leads to behaviours that are productive and successful. Individuals with confidence are more likely to take risks. Nurses will recognize that they are legitimate professionals and develop self-confidence in their ability to influence change. They can acknowledge their uniqueness and measure their merit against their own standards, instead of attempting to meet an externally imposed standard.

When nurses reflect on their professional experience, they will recognize their value and how they will be affected by their social conditioning. With that recognition, they will begin to revolt against the status quo and leaders will emerge from the grassroots. They will be role models for skills appropriate to leadership in their profession.

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