

Purpose

This position statement details the training, activities, the role and responsibilities of the Perioperative Nurse Surgical Assistant (PNSA)

Qualifications, Professional Registration and other requirements to be a Perioperative Nurse Surgical Assistant

The PNSA is required to satisfy credentialing requirements of the hospital and fulfill the following requirements

- Hold current registration as a registered nurse with AHPRA in Australia.
- Have a minimum of three (3) years perioperative experience if a post graduate certificate in perioperative nursing has been completed or five (5) years experience if a postgraduate certificate in perioperative nursing has not been completed.
- Have successfully completed or be currently enrolled in a postgraduate degree (minimum Graduate Certificate level) in PNSA studies by an approved university.
- Have evidence of public liability and professional indemnity insurance to the minimum level of 10 million dollars.
- Maintain professional competencies by undertaking continuous professional education (CPD) and participate in learning opportunities in the field of surgical assisting with a yearly assessment by an assessor as approved by the hospital facility.
- Meet the code of conduct for the AANSA
- Fulfill the minimum practicum hours of supervised surgical assisting hours as detailed by the approved university

Position Summary

Perioperative Nurse Surgeon Assistants (PNSA) are registered nurses who undertake an advanced practice nursing role as the first assistant in surgery. The PNSA is required at all times to work collaboratively with surgeons and other clinical staff to provide patients with the best possible quality of care. The PNSA is qualified to also provide patients an expanded role of care in all perioperative areas including pre-operative, intraoperative and post-operative care.

As surgical specialties require different skills and knowledge the PNSA's will develop specialty skills to best manage the requirements of the patients conditions. If a PNSA is required to work outside their normal specialty this should be discussed with the collaborative surgeon to ensure there is mentoring and education provided to safely provide the required skills and interventions.

AANSA recommends and supports the use of trained or training surgical assistants. It understands that emergency surgery may require the use of untrained surgical assistants; however this should be disclosed to the patient (when appropriate), be documented in the perioperative notes and included in the hospital risk management system.

A PNSA whom is undergoing their training requires the support and mentoring of the surgeon to complete the practical requirements of the course. The student PNSA is responsible for organising the mentorship, practical hours, credentialing and insurance. AANSA supports the credentialing of student PNSA's at hospitals with mentor surgeon support.

Areas of Practice for a Perioperative Nurse Surgical Assistants

Pre Surgery – Role and Responsibilities

Initial patient assessment, physical exam, medical history and coordination of pre surgery tests in collaboration with the surgeon

Patient education during the pre-surgery, intra operative and post-surgery phases of the patients episode of care.

Ensure the availability of required specialty equipment or instrumentation.

Intra Operative – Role and Responsibilities

The PNSA is required to perform the role of first assistant to the surgeon during the intraoperative phase of care in line with the PNSA standards set by ACORN and as directed by the operating surgeon. The key duties during the intraoperative phase include, but are not limited to:

Patient Safety

- Ensure the correct positioning of the patient and equipment
- Ensure the safety checklist is completed for each patient
- Ensure the correct use of all risk management measures such as VTE, Surgical site infection, and temperature management.
- Assist the management of the sterile field
- Safe use and management of electrosurgery and other generator energy sources including Laser.
- Safe management of sharps
- Uses supplies, instruments and equipment within safe parameters - as per TGA, design, and the surgeries requirements.
- Collaborates with perioperative team to perform surgical count.
- Administers prescribed medication and solutions.
- Ability to trouble-shoot specialty intraoperative equipment or instruments.

Physiological

- Demonstrates clinical expertise - tissue handling, manual dexterity in instrument handling, exposure of operation site, diathermy under the guidance of the surgeon, provision of haemostasis, Knot tying, suturing and injecting medications as required.
- Implements and maintains aseptic technique
- Assists in minimizing the invasive procedure length through planning care - communication, knowledge of anatomy, surgical skills and team work.

Behavioural Knowledge

- Maintains patient's dignity and privacy
- Practices in an ethical manner
- Provide individualized care
- Act as an educational resource
- Models professional behaviours
- Accepts collaborative responsibility

Post-Operative

- Monitoring of wound management and healing
- Ensures surgical preferences are completed
- Monitors changes in physiological parameters –
- Supports other perioperative and surgical nurses
- Individualises post-operative education for patient depending on surgical condition, age and individual needs.
- Educational resource for other perioperative or surgical nurses

Professional Attributes

- Use of best practice - currency and knowledge of standards, guidelines and research in area of specialty.
- Maintains credentialing requirements.
- Communication and teamwork skills of a professional health practitioner.
- Participates in professional activities including peer-review, education programs for self and other nurses
- Provides advice for policy and guideline development in the field of surgical assisting
- Active participant in professional associations or societies

AANSA encourage all PNSA's to maintain membership in specialty associations and or societies to promote the standards and skills of the PNSA.

As all PNSA's work in specialty areas of surgical practice, the criteria are broad. An individual PNSA has the ability the ability to explain their scope further within these areas or domains.

Outcome

This document will provide guidance in the credentialing of the PNSA, along with the training and mentorship of student PNSA's.

References

ACORN 2012 -2013, NR5, Perioperative Nurse Surgeon's Assistant.
AORN 2007 3rd Edition, RN First Assistant Guide to Practice, AORN, Denver, USA.
ANMC 2006 National Competency Standards for the Registered Nurse, Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council.