THE USE OF REFLECTIVE PRACTICE TO DEVELOP CRITICAL THINKING IN PERIANESTHESIA NURSING
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Background Information
Patients arrive to the perianesthesia setting with increasing numbers of co-morbidities and complex needs. We needed to develop a tool to help nurses new to our practice area learn how to quickly identify, prioritize, and resolve patient issues through critical thinking.

Objectives
Our objective was to aid the development of critical thinking skills through the use of a Reflective Practice Exercise based on Johns’ (2007) work in Reflective Practice.

Process of Implementation
Nurses in orientation were asked to complete the Reflective Practice Exercise worksheet based on a patient care situation that did not fit “the routine”. The exercise includes questions about (1) all details remembered about the situation, (2) what decisions were made by the nurse and other caregivers, (3) what influenced those decisions, (4) if the nurse would make those same decisions again, and (5) what learning the nurse believes needs to be done before encountering a similar situation in the future.

Statement of Successful Practice
Nurses who have completed this exercise have been able to identify appropriate patient situations and subsequent learning needed following these instances. They have reported qualitatively that this exercise helped them establish perspective on such challenging situations.

Implications for Advancing the Practice of Perianesthesia Nursing
Our unit plans to continue using this exercise with new nurses as well as more experienced nurses who may be struggling. While many nurses reflect on their day “naturally”, a guided Reflective Practice Exercise can help guide this habit into one that generates improved critical thinking skills.