The perianesthesia educational team sought to assess nurses’ comprehension both in orientation and throughout their tenure. Utilizing Zickuhr and Atsberger’s (1995) competency text as a guide, five levels of verbal competencies were developed by the education and management team. The three phases of Beginning Perianesthesia Nurse (BPAN) are completed at 45 days, 90 days and six months. Nurses at one year complete the Perianesthesia Nurse (PAN). An optional Advanced Perianesthesia Nurse (APAN) can be completed after the second year of perianesthesia practice.

The verbal competencies include management of patients throughout the perianesthesia setting. This includes information on anesthetics, post-operative complications, management of co-morbidities and specific surgical procedures. Nurses are given time out of staffing to prepare materials. The nurse then meets individually with a member of the education or management team to discuss. The meeting is designed to be an exploration of each topic rather than a punitive environment.

Nurses report the preparation time is helpful, and that additional knowledge is gained through the one on one discussion of content. The education team uses the results of these competencies to help guide performance evaluation of nurses in orientation. The management team reports using these meetings to gauge nurse readiness for leadership roles such as charge nurse and preceptor.

Care of the patient in the perianesthesia setting is often complex and requires deeper understanding than rote memorization. Assessment of nursing knowledge through verbal competencies prompts critical thinking skills and allows for additional learning through discussion and sharing.