



A Position Statement on Entry into Nursing Practice

The American Society of PeriAnesthesia Nurses (ASPAN) was organized for educational and scientific purposes. ASPAN encourages specialization and research in perianesthesia nursing, and promotes public awareness and understanding of the care of the perianesthesia patient. ASPAN endeavors to cooperate with universities, government agencies and other organizations to promote the profession of nursing as a whole and the perianesthesia nursing specialty in particular. The society is committed to maintaining and upgrading standards and to promoting the professional growth of all nurses, including those engaged in this nursing specialty.

ASPAN affirms its commitment to the advancement of the nursing profession by asserting that minimal educational preparation for entry into professional nursing practice shall be the baccalaureate degree in nursing (BSN).

Furthermore, registered nurses who have not attained a baccalaureate degree in nursing at the time of implementation shall be granted professional nursing status.

The elements of a profession are well known. It is not the role of the nursing profession to redefine those requirements. Requirements of a profession include, study of a unique body of knowledge, standard educational requirements, usually a minimum baccalaureate degree, standards for its own members, and self-government.

Nurses must position themselves to shape the future of their profession. This requires a broad-based educational program that prepares nurses to determine the direction of their profession and to interact with other professions effectively.

Clear inter-professional communication is necessary to promote a multidisciplinary team approach to patient care. The baccalaureate degree will orient nursing to increase this interprofessional collaboration for the benefit of the patient.

The scope of nursing practice has traditionally been dictated by non-nursing professionals. A standardized educational format will provide the increased nursing strength necessary for the nursing profession to determine its own scope of practice.

Research and specialization elevate the level of a profession. The baccalaureate preparation would provide the basic skill to support nursing research. The baccalaureate degree is the prerequisite for masters and doctorate-prepared nurses who would be the forerunners in nursing specialization and research.

ASPAN recognizes that nursing education is not yet prepared for a mandate requiring all registered nurses to seek a baccalaureate degree in nursing. Our goals, however, are to shape the future to this end and to present a common front with other nursing organizations in this area. The following challenges are among those that must be addressed before the baccalaureate requirement can become a reality.

Accessibility to baccalaureate nursing programs for the practicing registered nurse is essential. Legislators and nursing educators must act now to eliminate the current hindrances to the pursuit of higher education in nursing. They include, but are not limited to, lack of flexibility in baccalaureate programs, lack of standard criteria for assigning credit for previous class work and clinical experience, and lack of geographically situated programs for the practicing registered nurse. The insistence that previously-mastered nursing skills and knowledge be repeated rather than validated frustrates the potential student and lowers self esteem, clearly not the desired outcome of higher nursing education.

Standardization of nursing programs is needed, in both collegiate requirements and opportunities in clinical experience. The emphasis of accreditation agencies must be to provide high quality baccalaureate programs and begin to phase out non-baccalaureate programs. Agencies should reevaluate the current method of accreditation of programs. There should be a shift from subjective, retrospective evaluation of programs to an objective, prospective method to assure the nursing student graduation from an accredited program prior to commitment to the educational program. ASPAN encourages affiliation of non-baccalaureate programs in the university setting. This would create clinical opportunities which have not always been sufficient in baccalaureate programs.

ASPAN realizes that it may not be feasible for all practicing registered nurses to attain a BSN and will continue to support such members. ASPAN also realizes that nursing education is an on-going process. Nursing education has only begun in the collegiate setting. Professional growth requires commitment to high quality educational programs which allow nurses to maintain a professional edge in their chosen area of specialization and in the profession of nursing as a whole. ASPAN is committed to providing such high quality continuing education programs to its membership.

ASPAN will seek opportunities to resolve the programs hindering pursuit of this current professional goal. Based on an awareness and understanding of these unresolved issues, ASPAN will continue to respond to the ever changing needs of nurses in the perianesthesia setting and to share the practice of nursing through a progressive approach to future professional nursing concerns.

Support System

Registered nurses bring varied educational backgrounds to the profession of nursing. Each individual nurse has applied energy to excel, or desist, regardless of the basic education received. The opportunities for surpassing basics are varied. The motivated nurse can seek out the unknown and apply it to the present situation, but these opportunities are inconsistent. The nursing profession is, therefore, compelled to establish the standards for basic knowledge and skills that registered nurses must possess to begin the practice of nursing.

The perianesthesia nurse professional possesses expertise in the care of the patient in the perianesthesia setting. In addition to the physician and other members of the health care team, the perianesthesia nurse professional has a unique body of knowledge concerning the care of the pre-anesthetized and post anesthetized patient. This knowledge is essential to the safe practice of perianesthesia nursing.

ASPAN accepts the challenge to address the permeating issue of educational preparation. ASPAN joins other professional nursing organizations in support of the goal to establish the baccalaureate degree in nursing as the minimal educational requirement for entry into professional nursing practice.

ASPAN prefaces its support of this goal with the awareness that obstacles must be addressed before this realization can be achieved. ASPAN is committed to addressing these problems through effective communication with nursing educators, state nursing boards, professional nursing organizations, and legislative officials.

Approval of Statement

At the April 18, 1985 meeting of the ASPAN Board of Directors, each member was directed to vote in representation of their component on the issue of level of entry into professional nursing practice. The role call vote was in favor of the minimal educational requirement for entry into professional nursing practice be a Baccalaureate Degree in Nursing with Grandfather Clause to protect those nurses not currently holding such a degree at the time of requirement.

Each component organization was directed to provide a document supporting the vote at that Board of Directors meeting. The method used to determine component position was by choice of the individual component. These supporting documents are on file at the ASPAN National Office in Cherry Hill, New Jersey, and are available for review upon request.

This position statement was reviewed at the October 2007 meeting of ASPAN's Standards and Guidelines Committee in Batesville, Indiana. Bibliography updated.

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