



ASPAN

American Society of PeriAnesthesia Nurses

Clinical Practice: Frequently Asked Question

Q: Can licensed practical nurses (LPNs) or vocational nurses (VNs) work in the PACU if they are qualified (such as having BLS, ACLS, hemodynamic courses, arrhythmia courses, starting IVs, drawing blood, and working PACU for years)?

A: In reference to the question regarding the role of LPNs in the perianesthesia setting, ASPAN does not have a standard or position statement that specifically addresses this, regardless of the type of surgical facility.

The ASPAN standards regarding nurse:patient ratios for Phase II state that two competent personnel should be available in the same room as a patient receiving Phase II level of care, one being an RN competent in Phase II nursing. In many facilities the second competent personnel is often a nurse's aide or other non-RN personnel, including the LPN. It is important to remember the scope of practice for the RN defines the ultimate standard of care for a patient, including the assessment, planning of care, implementation and evaluation of outcomes.

Each state board of nursing has specific rules and regulations regarding the use of practical nurses and determines which tasks fall under the RN license and which can be performed by the LPN. In terms of the scope of practice for the LPN, the LPN provides direct patient care and functions in a task-oriented manner. The scope of practice for the RN is more multifaceted and involves more complex assessments and procedures. The critical difference is that the actions of the LPN ought to be delegated by the RN rather than be independent of the RN. Each facility also describes the role of the LPN on an institutional basis.

Bibliography:

- American Nurses Association. Registered Nurses as Professionals, Advocates, Innovators, and Collaborative Leaders: Executive Summary. 2017. Available at: <http://ojin.nursingworld.org/MainMenuCategories/ANAMarketplace/ANAPeriodicals/OJIN/Tab/eofContents/Vol-21-2016/No3-Sept-2016/Registered-Nurses-Executive-Summ.html>. Accessed July 24, 2019
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