

Perioperative Observation Impact on Student Perception of RN Role and Safety Practices

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Introduction: The perioperative environment has a strong safety focus and culture. Faculty planned a project to increase student knowledge about the perioperative environment and safety practices.

Identification of the problem: Many schools of nursing have limited perioperative experiences (Chappy et al., 2016; Danko, 2019; Doroh & Monahan, 2016). Limited exposure may hinder student understanding of safety within the environment and may impact student interest in future employment.

Purpose of the Study: This study evaluated student's perception of knowledge gained and intent to apply perioperative safety concepts.

Methodology: Students were presented information about the preoperative, intraoperative, and postoperative areas and skills and tasks of the perioperative team with an enhanced focus on safety. Each student participated in a 10-hour experience following patients from the preoperative phase, to the operating room, postanesthesia area, and discharge from a surgery center or admission to a hospital room. After the experience, students completed a survey and reflection assignment.

IRB approval was granted for a mixed method design.

Results: Thematic analysis revealed that the students gained knowledge and learned to value; 1) Effective teamwork within perioperative environment, 2) RN role in safe perioperative care, and 3) Quality communication by the perioperative team. Student's noted that they now feel more confident in their role of patient advocate and can support the patient when undergoing surgery or procedure. Our data also provided insight to the students' interest in perioperative nursing as a career choice. The majority of the students related appreciation for or interest in the perioperative nurse role. Of the 99 participants, only 9 stated that the environment is not for them.

Discussion: This study supported that a perioperative experience reinforced safety concepts and allowed students to see the perioperative nurse "in action" and provided an inside view of the perioperative environment.

Conclusion: A clinical observation in perioperative areas may influence the knowledge and intent to apply knowledge to their own practice as well as garner interest in the perioperative nurse role.

Implications for perianesthesia nurses and future research: This information could be used to support implementation of perioperative experiences in nursing programs and reinforce the role of the RN to ensure safe and quality care. The perioperative experience may also be a recruitment tool.