

## **POSITION STATEMENT ON THEATER NURSES**

### **Introduction**

Theater nurses are nurses who are offering comprehensive specialized care in a specialized unit. They are categorized as scrub, anesthetic, circulating and recovery nurses. They all practice according to the Nursing Act and all relevant regulations from the South African Nursing Council (SANC). All these nurses are therefore expected to practice in accordance with their scope of practice as per regulations of the South African Nursing Council and its prescripts.

### **Definition of key words**

*An anesthetic nurse*- is a nurse who specializes in the administration of anesthesia

*Scrub nurse* - a nurse who prepares and controls instrumentation, swabs and sharps for the operation to be performed.

*Circulating nurse* -is a nurse who supplies scrub nurse with all sterile items needed during the operation.

*Recovery nurse* – is a nurse who nurses and recovers patient from anesthesia post-operatively.

### **DENOSA notes that:**

- Theater nurses are more susceptible to litigation.
- The scope of practice for this cadre is not clearly defined and is fragmented
- In practice, theatre nurses end up treated as assistant doctors due to lack of clearly defined scope of practice for theatre nurses.

### **DENOSA believes that:**

- Theater nurses should be trained according to their specific roles and responsibility in the theater room.
- Theater nurse should practice within their scope of practice.
- An employer is obliged to provide and maintain enough theater nurses in all respective roles.
- A comprehensive training in the theater technique should be provided for theatre nurses.
- Adequate and necessary material and human resource in theaters should be made available.

### **DENOSA position**

- Theater nurses should practice within their scope of practice.

- All theater nurses' roles should be practiced interdependently.
- The professional nurse as a scrub nurse takes the full responsibility for the safety and efficiency of the sterile field.
- All theater nurses are obliged to adhere to the principles of aseptic technique
- Scrub nurses must never act as an assistant surgery.
- Theater nurses should monitor and keep records preoperatively, intraoperative and postoperatively.
- Theater nurses should visit each and every patient pre-operatively,
  - To ensure an informed consent has been obtained.
  - To ensure the eligibility of the consent.
  - To ensure the eligibility of the patient to give consent.
  - To tell the patient about what to expect preoperatively, intraoperative and postoperatively.

## **Conclusion**

Given the sensitivity in the nature of work theatre nurses do, it is quite imperative that the scope of practice for theatre nurses be clearly defined and articulated. This scope should be built from the country's existing legislative frameworks governing the nursing profession and practice. This in turn would ensure that theatre nurses understand their scope of practice well and would eliminate and minimize the prevalence of litigations in theater.

## **References**

Berry & Kohn's 1996 : Operating room theater technique. McGRAW – Hill book Company. New York St Louis.

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