Orientation is the first step in developing the skills, knowledge and behaviors needed to practice as a perianesthesia nurse. The process of growing from a novice to an expert perianesthesia nurse needs to continue beyond orientation through mentoring. For this reason, we include a chapter with some thoughts on the mentoring process and how to ensure that we continue to support the professional growth of each nurse once the formal orientation is complete.

*This chapter does not have any testing or competency criteria for the nurse to meet, but should be used as information for the preceptor.*

**Mentoring: Beyond Orientation**

Many nurses can recall their orientation and initiation into the specialty of perianesthesia practice. Although most would attest to a steep learning curve, nurses who are mentored beyond orientation by nurse colleagues have experienced a smoother transition through multiple obstacles and challenges. Nurse mentors provide support and guidance and serve as teachers and coaches. “Mentoring relationships in critical care provide the ongoing interactions, coaching, teaching and role modeling to facilitate nurses’ progression along this continuum. Mentoring relationships offer support and professional development for nurses at all levels within an organization as well as an optimistic outlook for the nursing profession.”

Coaching for nurses includes approaches or strategies which develop skills and knowledge through positive, timely feedback. In addition, many of us have been protégés in numerous situations while learning ‘skilled know-how’. It is imperative that the collective wisdom of seasoned perianesthesia nurses be shared and passed on to nurses entering specialty clinical units.

Perianesthesia nursing practice can be enhanced and enriched through the contributions of nurse mentors. Mentoring relationships and behaviors assure continuity and pass along a specific advanced body of knowledge and a legacy of leadership to the next generation of perianesthesia nurses. The culture of a perianesthesia unit is affected by mentoring behaviors. The work environment can evolve into one that is more conducive to the exchange of ideas and to the initiation of innovative solutions to recurring problems and issues. The quality of the workplace is thus improved, resulting ultimately in a higher quality of patient care.

Experienced perianesthesia nurses can play a pivotal role in nurturing and developing novice nurses in our specialty. Preparing a professional nurse to move from novice perianesthesia practitioner to an autonomous, self-directed practitioner requires more than a preceptor-orientee relationship. Retention, job satisfaction, self-esteem, esprit-de-corps and professionalism are enhanced when the time is taken to move beyond competency based orientation to include the mentoring of the novice nurse.

Expert nurses who are willing to share experiential knowledge, critical thinking and insight with junior staff nurses serve as mentors. This mentoring process sets the stage for growth and success for nurses throughout their careers. It helps them circumvent situations that would result in learning the hard way. “As we choose to mentor nurses and nursing, we take responsibility to be caretakers of our professional practice. Mentoring is an investment in the future. It is acting on the belief in the potential of our colleagues and students.” It helps nurses who are new staff nurses on a clinical unit to follow the path of experienced nurses, who pass on knowledge and practical problem solving skills.

Mentoring strengthens and reinforces the skills and tasks completed during the orientation phase. It is more than sharing knowledge and ensuring safe, competent practice. Mentoring awakens confidence in one’s own abilities. Mentoring provides an opportunity to advance nursing and individual nurses in a challenging, rewarding manner. It can be a complex developing, nurturing and empowering relationship that endures for a long time period. At times, a mentoring relationship can be of short duration, in a limited time frame and can still serve to benefit the growth of the professional nurse.
Behaviors and Characteristics
Distinct behaviors and characteristics are unique to mentoring relationships. Mentors can:

- Establish trust, encourage a safe relationship
- Open doors to experiences and growth opportunities
- Provide coaching and advice on goal setting
- Serve as role models
- Reduce frustration, increase level of loyalty
- Promote respect for others
- Increase success, productivity, security
- Enhance sense of well-being
- Improve career satisfaction
- Exchange relevant resources
- Promote a positive outlook
- Share passions and concerns
- Maintain careful communication with honest, constructive feedback
- Nurture a sense of belonging and promote inclusion
- Increase personal job satisfaction and feeling of being valued
- Commit to self-learning and learning of others

The protégé, in the process of learning and growing, should also exhibit certain behaviors and characteristics that will enhance the mentoring process, which include:

- Respect the mentor’s time and efforts
- Take action on information provided
- Explore goals and dreams with the ability to tap into potential, dreams, expectations
  - Rededicate to the career of nursing and a quest for learning
  - Exhibit a desire to be mentored with an openness to receiving help, learning, sharing
  - Portray a passion for work undertaken; admiration of the mentor’s achievements
  - Participate voluntarily
  - Communicate interactively with enhanced learning skills
  - Maintain a desire to improve the quality of patient care

FOSTERING MENTORSHIP
Attention to environment, communication and support can enhance the nurses’ application of mentoring behaviors in perianesthesia settings.

Creating an environment conducive to mentorship
An environment that is non-threatening, welcoming and inclusive eases the socialization of a novice nurse within the clinical unit. There are numerous situations that can be facilitated by mentoring behaviors. Obvious issues such as the location of supplies, equipment, time sheets and locker rooms are covered during orientation.

Mentors continue to educate and also step in to avert potentially humiliating situations for a beginning nurse. Include the new nurse in conversations and spontaneous learning opportunities. A patient who presents in an unusual manner or who is not following an expected course of recovery provides an ideal opportunity to explore possible diagnoses and treatment scenarios. Explain the chain of command unique to this workplace as critical information for the nurse struggling to ‘do it all right’ and fit in with the group. Share the nuances of paging certain physicians and knowledge of physician or charge nurse preferences as well as their ‘hot buttons’ to avoid verbal parleys. A mentor notices questions that are causing the novice nurse to be tongue-tied or look ‘cornered’. The swift action by a colleague, or mentor, can empower the struggling nurse to collect thoughts, restate the problem or answer with renewed courage from the evident support of a mentor.

Mentors are accountable for intervention and directing priorities when patient safety is at risk or can be enhanced.
Communication
Communication, both verbal and nonverbal, sends messages that are intensely meaningful to novice nurses. The way a mentor explains decisions, rationales and actions can either challenge or intimidate a new nurse. Mutual problem solving, provocative statements and thoughtful encouragement foster growth and nurture the new nurse to seek answers in a non-threatening manner. Honest feedback, with appropriate gentle confrontation, can assist the novice nurse to adjust goals or actively think and share these thoughts with mentors and peers. Non-verbal mentoring is demonstrated through behavior and offers invaluable lessons. Positive role modeling is perhaps more important than the mentor might ever realize. Good listening skills and a visible interest in the perspective of the novice nurse are nurturing behaviors. They express a belief in the value and potential of others. As these behaviors are viewed by other nurse colleagues, an opportunity exists to influence a larger group of nurses. Open-minded discussions cultivate growth and guide the protégé to identify, clarify and define issues and potential barriers to success.

Mutual Sharing and Learning
Mentors and protégés benefit from a positive, nurturing relationship. Mutual sharing and learning are catalysts for growth and transformation. Mentors have the opportunity to sharpen interpersonal skills and to contribute to the profession of nursing. The protégé can learn new information and develop an improved understanding of organizational issues and power structures. Many nurses can share stories that detail significant turning points for them during years of practice. For instance, a nurse who has cared for patients with emergence delirium, pseudocholinesterase deficiency, sepsis, hemorrhage or malignant hyperthermia can relate the scenario with minute detail, so that the novice nurse sees the whole picture. The personal history and stories of nurses are unique and valuable. Experienced nurses understand that their sixth sense, their overwhelming concern for a patient’s welfare, even when clinical signs are still within normal limits, always deserves the utmost attention. Past successes with the ‘power of certainty’ give seasoned nurses confidence and authority. This confidence is evident and helpful to showcase for novice nurses. Mentors are rewarded for this kind of sharing when the novice or beginning perianesthesia nurse relates a scenario complete with critical thinking, intuitive reasoning and follow-through. It is very powerful to be right about a nursing diagnosis to prevent a negative outcome and to preempt a critical situation.

Support of Efforts
Visible support of the efforts of novice nurses is another example of a mentoring behavior that can be universally embraced by seasoned nurses. Verbal support and the offer of an encouraging word when quality care has been delivered can mean so much. Take the time to thank your new nursing colleague when they have spent extra time assisting in the care of a difficult patient. Congratulate them as milestones, such as completion of a critical care course, passing a test or finishing a case study are achieved. Ask the new perianesthesia nurse to share the details of the first ‘call case.’ Let the nurse know his/her efforts are noticed and appreciated. Acknowledge growth and confidence in caring for challenging patients. Offer help with communication strategies and to fine-tune skills, such as preadmission screening for complex cases or measuring and interpreting cardiac output. Share tips regarding successful interactions with physicians and nursing colleagues from other clinical units.

In conclusion, mentoring novice nurses generates a sense of belonging. The outcome can be mutual personal growth, significant transitions in shared knowledge, enhanced morale and motivation and renewed connectedness. Mentors should be approachable, supportive, confident, pleasant and positive in attitude and behavior. Protégés, or novice nurses, should be respectful, courteous, professional and hard working. If there is an eagerness to learn, a desire to gain insight and expertise and an understanding that the novice needs self-direction, mutual respect is facilitated. Through sharing wisdom and experience, mentors and novice nurses enhance individual and collective self worth, professional productivity and overall value to perianesthesia nursing units. The outcome is meaningful for nurses and the benefit extends to the clinical unit and the provision of excellent patient care.
References

Bibliography


