

An Innovative Program Connecting Undergraduate Nurses to Perioperative Practice

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Background:

A shortage of specialist nurses, compounded by the rapidly growing population, increasing age of nurses and lack of undergraduate nurse exposure to perioperative nursing, necessitates innovative measures to introduce perioperative nursing as a rewarding career option.

Introducing Undergraduate Nurses to Perioperative Practice

Monash Health has developed an interactive program to enable students to experience perioperative patient care, within an interactive, preceptored environment.

Teaching & Learning:

Various teaching and learning strategies are employed, encouraging students to become involved and empowered to gain insight into the perioperative patient journey and the complexities associated with this diverse specialty area, as they complete a comprehensive series of learning activities during their undergraduate rotation.

Inclusion to Stimulate Interest

Undergraduate nursing students are preceptored by a superb team of perioperative nurses, using a structured program.

This level of inclusion integrates them into the multidisciplinary team, focussing on evidence-based practice and perioperative patient care.

Allowing students to experience aspects of care delivered by various nursing and medical roles.

Engaging Through Preceptored Immersion

Engaging undergraduate nurses through preceptored immersion, to connect clinical practice with theoretical concepts and create a positive experience involves:

- ⇒ Careful preparation & selection of preceptors;
- ⇒ Welcoming with empathy;
- ⇒ Student orientation and structured learning;
- ⇒ Collaborative relationships with the multidisciplinary team;
- ⇒ Regular feedback.

Selection & Preparation of Preceptors

Preceptors *want* to teach those with less experience;

Their welcoming, inclusive, genuine, empathetic, approachable, knowledgeable and enthusiastic manner is infective!

Preceptors complete the Monash Health: 'Preceptor / Assessment Course'

Welcoming with Empathy

Prior to commencing their perioperative placement, students receive a welcome message and information package from the Undergraduate Coordinator;

Learning activities with a timetable allocating them to specific, preceptored areas of practice, aligned with the length of their placement, are distributed;

On their first day, students are orientated to the Operating Suite, and the broader hospital.

Expectations and assessments are discussed.

Structured Learning

Students work 4 x 10 hour shifts, experiencing:

- ⇒ Holding Bay;
- ⇒ Sterilising Services Unit;
- ⇒ Instrument / Circulating Nursing;
- ⇒ Anaesthetics;
- ⇒ Post Anaesthetic Care Unit (PACU).

Students carry learning activities in their pocket, and tend to quickly develop a rapport with their preceptor and the multidisciplinary team, as they are required to ask lots of questions.

Appropriate Student Allocations:

Daily review of student allocations is important, as lists and staffing often change.

Some procedures may be inappropriate for undergraduate nurses e.g. a large number of staff required for a procedure i.e. more than one surgical team involved, resulting in insufficient room; confronting surgery i.e. organ retrieval; surgical procedures for patients requiring complex, additional infection control precautions.

Learning Activities - Holding Bay:

- Review the Monash Health preoperative checking process and a consent form with your Preceptor, and explain how the patient is identified and their proposed procedure is verified;
- Explain why only certain abbreviations are permitted on a Consent form;
- Define 'informed consent' and describe what a surgeon may discuss with a patient when providing this;
- How can you confirm that a patient understands the procedure for which they have consented;
- Explain what a nurse should do if a patient states they have changed their mind, and do not want to undergo surgery;

Learning Activities - Holding Bay:

- If a patient's hand is bandaged preoperatively and they are scheduled for surgery on one of their fingers, explain where the site of surgery should be marked preoperatively;
- Explain the term 'fasting' and why patients are required to fast before surgery;
- Outline why is it important to check a patient's allergy status e.g. allergies to medications, tapes, lotions, foods or anything else?
- Describe why a patient may be anxious preoperatively.

Learning Activities – Anaesthesia:

- Observe the process of checking an anaesthetic machine before use and explain why this is done;
- Ask your Preceptor to explain why intravenous (IV) access must be secured before anaesthesia commences;
- Observe the priming of an arterial line and describe why this is being used;
- Ask the Anaesthetist to explain which medications will be administered for:
 - Pre-emptive analgesia;
 - Anaesthesia;
 - Antibiotic prophylaxis.

Learning Activities – Anaesthesia:

- Explain checks completed to ensure the right patient is taken into the correct operating theatre for surgery;
- Observe how the Anaesthetic Nurse prepares a patient for spinal anaesthesia. What are your observations about patient positioning and monitoring;
- Ask the Anaesthetist why hypotension can occur with spinal anaesthesia.

Learning Activities - Instrument / Circulating:

- Observe preoperative preparations completed by the Instrument & Circulating Nurses;
- Demonstrate how to perform a surgical rub and then how to 'gown' and 'glove' for a surgical procedure;
- Provide an example of how an Instrument Nurse protects the aseptic field.
- How does 'diathermy' help to minimise blood loss and improve vision at the surgical site;
- Explain why the 'Surgical Count,' 'Instrument Tray Lists' and 'Tracking Sheet' are used for surgical procedures

Learning Activities - Instrument / Circulating:

- Ask your Preceptor to explain why a 'Surgical Countsheet,' 'Instrument Tray Lists' and 'Tracking Sheet' are used for surgical procedures;
- Explain why a patient undergoing a caesarean section has a urinary catheter inserted;
- What is the name of the retractor used to hold the patient's bladder out of the way during a caesarean section procedure;
- Describe why an accurate process of handling, labelling, registering and dispatch of specimens for Histopathology is vitally important.

Learning Activities – Post Anaesthetic Care Unit:

- Describe the equipment checked by PACU staff each day, before patients are admitted to PACU;
- Explain what the Anaesthetist hands over to the PACU Nurse when a patient arrives postoperatively;
- What actions does the PACU Nurse undertake when a postoperative patient is admitted to PACU;
- Explain PACU patient assessments in relation to:
 - Airway / Breathing;
 - Conscious state;
 - Monitoring;
 - IV / Arterial Lines.

Learning Activities – Post Anaesthetic Care Unit:

- Explain how the PACU Nurse assesses a patient's postoperative pain with a 'pain scale;'
- What would the PACU Nurse do if analgesia administered does not ease a patient's pain;
- Describe the effect of IV Tramadol and outline why it should be administered very slowly;
- Explain how the PACU Nurse would manage a patient with postoperative nausea and vomiting (PONV);
- How, when and why are patient dressings checked in PACU? If their dressing is 'oozing' what should be done and documented?

Learning Activities – Post Anaesthetic Care Unit :

- Explain why drain tubes are used and what is checked and documented in PACU if a patient has a drain tube;
- Patient urinary output may be assessed postoperatively and findings recorded. Describe the signs and symptoms of a full bladder in a postoperative patient;
- Explain how the PACU RN determines when a patient is ready to return to the Ward or Day Surgery;
- Define the acronym 'ISBAR' and provide an example below of care handed over to Ward staff for a patient who has undergone a caesarean section:

An Unanticipated Career Path!

Monash Health welcomes undergraduate nursing students from various Universities for 2, 3, 4 or 5 week perioperative placements from February to December.

Most students are planning their career path, and securing a place in a Graduate Nurse Program is their main goal following completion of their degree.

A perioperative placement at Monash Health often steers their future career plans towards *an unanticipated direction!*

Fertile Ground for Recruitment

Undergraduate nurses who complete the structured learning activities and enjoy their perioperative nursing placement at Dandenong Hospital, often apply for a Graduate Nurse Program position at Monash Health and request a perioperative nursing rotation.

Focus of Interest:

This presentation has described an effective process to engage undergraduate nurses, through supported immersion, linking clinical practice with theoretical concepts to create a positive, perioperative experience.

Careful preparation and selection of preceptors, collaboration with the multidisciplinary team, student orientation and empowerment, combined with regular feedback, are pivotal to the success of this program.

An Effective Model:

Providing nursing theory and preceptored clinical experience for undergraduate students, using a collaborative, multidisciplinary arrangement are recommended as an effective model to connect undergraduate nurses to perioperative nursing.

**Thank you to the wonderful team at Dandenong Hospital,
Monash Health!**

Any questions?



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