

Assisting at surgery

Opportunities grow for advanced practice RNs

Does your hospital have advanced practice RNs (APRNs) who want to assist in surgery? Are your perioperative nurses, including RN first assistants, interested in advanced practice?

Here are things to know about this developing role.

What is an APRN?

The APRN is a direct patient care role that requires advanced clinical knowledge and skills.

A consensus model from the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN), which seeks to standardize the role, is likely to govern APRN practice in the future. The model, known as LACE, addresses licensure, accreditation, certification, and education (sidebar).

NCSBN seeks to have state boards of nursing adopt a separate additional APRN license based on the LACE model by 2015.

What is the APRN's scope of practice?

Currently, the scope of practice varies by state, which the LACE model seeks to change. Under the model, state boards of nursing would license APRNs as independent practitioners without requirements for collaboration, direction, or supervision.

What are the qualifications?

The LACE model specifies a master's degree specific to 1 of 4 APRN roles with a population focus plus national certification, also specific to the role.

Important to note: Master's-prepared RNs would be eligible for an APRN license only if their master's is in one of the 4 roles: nurse practitioner, clinical nurse specialist (CNS), certified nurse-midwife, or certified registered nurse anesthetist. Thus, nurses with a master's in nursing, education, or administration would not be eligible unless they earn an additional APRN master's and certification.

A caveat: Some states don't recognize the CNS as an APRN.

"Check that before selecting a master's program. You might not want to spend time and money on a curriculum if you won't be able to use that to the fullest extent after you graduate," advises Julie Mower, MSN, RN, CNS, CNOR, credentialing and education program manager for the Competency and Credentialing Institute (CCI), the governing body for the CNOR and CRNFA credentials. CCI conducted a job analysis of the APRN role in perioperative nursing in 2011, which would be the basis for any future exam for that role.

What can an APRN do in perioperative nursing?

The APRN role is appealing to surgeons because it allows them to maximize their time in the OR, Mower says.

Among duties an APRN can perform, depending on the state:

- **Admit/discharge patients.** The additional knowledge from advanced courses helps

APRNs to do more complete history and physicals. They can also make postop rounds and discharge patients.

- **Prescribe medications.** Most states grant APRNs at least some prescribing authority.
- **Bill for their services.** Under Medicare and Medicaid, the 4 types of certified APRNs, if appropriately certified, can bill for their services. Some commercial insurers also accept APRN claims. Some will reimburse RNFAs who are not APRNs, though Medicare and Medicaid will not.

Because the majority of patients are on Medicare or Medicaid, Mower notes, "It behooves you to become a certified APRN; then you don't have to worry about whether you can bill."

AORN is developing a position statement on the APRN in perioperative nursing, expected in Fall 2012.

Will APRN certification be available for perioperative nursing?

CCI hopes eventually to provide an exam, but it isn't feasible right now, Mower says. One obstacle is the small number of nurses who might be candidates.

Are APRNs becoming RNFAs?

APRNs are showing increasing interest in RNFA courses.

In fact, 75% of the students in this year's RNFA course at the University of California Los Angeles extension program are APRNs, says Bob Salsameda, MSN, RN, NP-C, CRNFA, who has taught the course for 22 years.

"Every year it's increasing," he says. "I see that as the future."

Are there APRN programs for perioperative nurses?

Mower says she knows of 2 APRN master's programs with a perioperative option at this time:

- Western University of the Health Sciences, Pomona, California, offers a family nurse practitioner program with a perioperative option for qualified RNFAs and other perioperative nurses to obtain their APRN certification. The new perioperative option was set up in collaboration with the OR Nursing Council of California (ORNCC). (<http://prospective.westernu.edu/nursing-msn-fnp/welcome>).
- Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, Bethesda, Maryland offers a perioperative CNS program. (www.usuhs.mil/gsn/curriculum/pcns.html).

What is a good population focus for periop nurses pursuing an APRN?

The decision depends on a nurse's career direction.

"It's a personal choice. You need to look at where you want your career to go," advises Suzanne Ward, MN, MA, RN, CNOR(e), of the ORNCC who worked with Western University of the Health Sciences on its new perioperative option.

For an RN who wants to care for a general surgical population, the best choice is the family nurse practitioner focusing on the family/individual across the lifespan, she notes. Care of adults is included in that focus.

For a nurse who plans to focus exclusively on adults, pediatrics, or women's health throughout his or her career, one of those population focuses might be a good choice.

But be aware the APRN roles are siloed, Ward cautions. That means, in the future, under the LACE model, a nurse's APRN license would be specific to the role and population focus. That is, an APRN licensed as an NP in pediatrics would not be li-

APRN consensus model

The model's basic features:

- The APRN title would be restricted to nurses with an APRN license.
- APRNs would be licensed in 1 of 4 roles with a population focus: nurse practitioner (NP), clinical nurse specialist (CNS), certified nurse-midwife (CNM), or certified registered nurse anesthetist (CRNA).
- The APRN population focuses are: family/individual across lifespan, adult-gerontology, neonatal, pediatrics, women's health, psychiatric-mental health.
- The APRN license would require:
 - a master's from an accredited program that meets specific requirements. Among these would be 3 courses: advanced physiology/pathophysiology, advanced physical assessment, and advanced health assessment plus a minimum of 500 clinical hours.
 - a national APRN certification exam congruent with the person's APRN education.

Source: National Council of State Boards of Nursing. www.ncsbn.org

censed as an APRN to care for adults. On the other hand, an APRN licensed as an NP in family practice would be licensed for any age group. ❖

—Pat Patterson

CCI has an educational tool kit for the APRN role in perioperative nursing at www.cc-institute.org.

Resources

Advanced practice RN

Consensus Model for APRN Regulation: Licensure, Accreditation, Certification & Education, July 7, 2008. <http://nursingcertification.org/pdf/Approved%20Consensus%20Document%20-%207-2008.pdf>

National Council of State Boards of Nursing

APRN videos

What is an APRN?

APRNs and You

www.ncsbn.org/2732.htm

APRN Consensus Model Legislation map

www.ncsbn.org/aprn.htm#certification

Georgetown University

Nursing license map

Clickable state map shows nursing licensure requirements for each state. <http://nursinglicensemap.com/>

**Have a question
on the OR
revenue cycle?**

Keith Siddel will respond to questions in the column. Send your questions to editor@ormanager.com

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