



College of Operating Department Practitioners

Position Statement – Assistance to the Anaesthetist and Anaesthesia Associate

Assistance to the Anaesthetist and Anaesthesia Associate is an essential role within Operating Department Practice. Hazards in anaesthesia can be related to the airway, respiratory system, cardiovascular system, peripheral nervous system, central nervous system and drug related¹. In the event of any of these hazards, skilled and knowledgeable assistance by the Operating Department Practitioner is imperative.

The Association of Anaesthetists identify that trained assistance should always be provided wherever anaesthesia is carried out². The Association of Anaesthetists further identify that assistance for the anaesthetist may be provided by Operating Department Practitioners or adequately trained Registered Nurses. Whatever the background, the training for all anaesthesia assistants must comply fully with national standards, such as the College of Operating Department Practitioners (CODP) curriculum³, the Perioperative Care Collaborative curriculum⁴ or the NHS Education for Scotland core competency framework for anaesthetic assistants⁵. Employment of staff without a qualification that complies with national standards is not acceptable².

The Association of Anaesthetists requires that a Nurse undertaking the role of the anaesthetic assistant should complete a programme that allows the Nurse to meet the competencies equivalent to those in the CODP pre-registration ODP curriculum document and that a Nurse should not assist an anaesthetist until successful completion of a course which includes these competencies².

In relation to this course, the College of Operating Department Practitioners view that a Nurse should undertake the Anaesthetic Pathway of the Perioperative Care Collaborative National Core Curriculum for Perioperative Nurses or at the very minimum, a Level 6 module in anaesthetics delivered at a Higher Education Institution. These modules will be validated and are subject to internal and external scrutiny and in addition, have a robust theoretical assessment. The College of Operating Department Practitioners does not support Nurses undertaking 'in-house' training as the College believes this approach is not equivalent to either the anaesthetic pathway of the Perioperative Care Collaborative or a Level 6 module in anaesthetics delivered at a Higher Education Institution.

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References

1. Merry, A.F., Mitchel, S.J. (2018) Complications of anaesthesia. *Anaesthesia* 73 (Suppl 1) pp 7-11.
2. Association of Anaesthetists (2018) *The Anaesthesia Team*. London: Association of Anaesthetists.
3. College of Operating Department Practitioners (CODP) (2018) *BSc(Hons) in Operating Department Practice Curriculum Document*. London: College of Operating Department Practitioners.
4. Perioperative Care Collaborative (PCC) (2017) *National Core Curriculum for Perioperative Nurses*. London: Perioperative Care Collaborative.
5. NHS Education for Scotland (2018) *Core Competency Framework for Anaesthetic Assistants*. Edinburgh: NHS Education for Scotland.