Standard of the Month January 2021

Happy New Year! As every new calendar year is associated with the intent to make positive changes to our lives, this month we wanted to address the ORNAC standards surrounding changeover of staff during a procedure. Here are some questions that have been submitted to the ORNAC Standards Committee and the responses provided.

What are the recommendations for conducting changeover counts?

• A changeover count of all items counted at the initial count should be completed at permanent relief of the scrub or circulating nurse (3.15.19). According to the ORNAC standards, when relieving for a break only (i.e. the person being relieved intends to return), a changeover count is not necessary, however Hospital policy may require a count be completed.

• The outgoing nurse(s) should remain in the OR until the changeover count is completed (3.15.20). Rationale-if there are any count discrepancies, the outgoing staff are able to assist in resolving them.

• Multiple changeovers are a known contributing factor to the risk of retained surgical items (3.15.1). Multiple changeover counts also can be a source of distraction to the surgical team, cause disruption to the surgery, and contribute to complacency in counting. If possible, staff should be scheduled in a way to minimize the number of changeovers during a procedure.

What information should be communicated at changeover?

• 3.21.5 contains a list of items that should be communicated during care transitions including;
  • patient assessment information,
  • medications administered and those on the sterile field,
  • surgical count status,
  • specimen information.

• The use of a standardized transfer of accountability tool is recommended (3.21.3). This helps to ensure that all pertinent information is shared.

For more information on communication during care transitions, please see ORNAC Standards, Guidelines, and Position Statements for Perioperative Registered Nurses (2019) Section 3.21.