



We Are Getting Older and Yet, We Are Getting Better and Wiser!

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Abstract

The aging expert nurse will soon be extinct according to recent surveys performed by the American Nurses Association and generations following will not be able to replace the Baby Boomers according to the census Bureau. For these reasons, hospitals should address and be proactive in solving the impending problems with the aging expert workforce. In response to the bleak outlook of the future in nursing, the management and staff of the Operating Room at the National Institutes of Health began to cognitively make choices and develop strategies to compensate for potential issues that affect all expert nurses. This was identified and articulated as a priority, after attendance by the OR Manager at the 2007 Association of Operating Room Nurses Congress. The impact of acknowledging the phenomenon of the aging perioperative nursing population is impressive. Patricia Brenner's research from Novice to Expert showed the expert nurse as having an unusual perceptual ability and common sense understanding about patient care to any situation and to read and respond to the whole picture. The American Association of Retired Persons document older workers as passionate about their work and feel more connected to their workplace. For the purpose of this poster, the expert nurse is defined as the older nurse with extensive years of experience. The purpose of this poster is to highlight the wisdom of the expert nurse along with highlighting the initiatives of the Department of Anesthesia and Surgical Services which compensate for issues and potential issues that affect the aging expert nurse.



Barbara Gallagher RN illustrating ESU enlarged numbers for easy visualization

Impairments Facing These Nurses

Vision	Smell
Hearing	Memory
Touch	Mobility



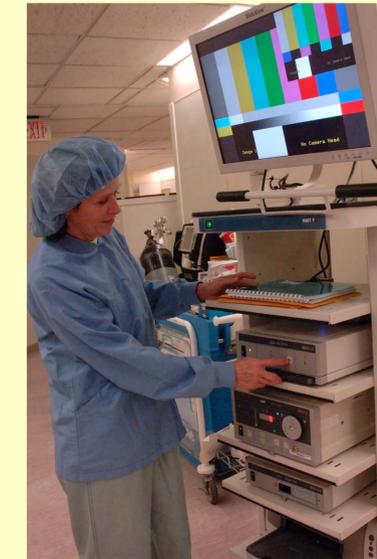
Juanita Washington RN at robotic/laparoscopic nurse workstation

DASS Initiatives Which Help the Aging Expert Nurse Compensate

- Equipment purchases that are all inclusive of technology potentials i.e. ESU, Ligasure and Argon in one; "All in one technology"
- Large print identifiers on equipment
- List of equipment numbers at charting sites
- Marking selected equipment as "left" and "right" when appropriate-not just manufacturers pictures i.e. yellow fin stirrups
- Laparoscopic control desk
- Laparoscopic surgeon control panel
- Flexible work schedules which support departmental needs
- "User friendly" solutions i.e. easy to open
- Accessible electric outlets

Outcome/Staff Response Statements to Individual Implementations

- "This is the best idea these large numbers. I can really see them without getting on my hands and knees"
- "Oh, thank you"
- "I don't have to crawl around on the floor between the field and the equipment anymore"
- "Thanks for consolidating my equipment I can move with ease without acute fear of contaminating the sterile field"
- "Oh these carts are light and easy to move and I can see the screens without my glasses"
- "Color coding these directions really help"



Ruth Nunes RN setting up new high definition flat screen video monitor



José Garcia RN documenting electronically with the use of equipment chart and documentation "cheat-sheet"

Perioperative Implications

- According to Barbara Hatcher, RN, PHD
- The institutional and professional knowledge of the older nurse is irreplaceable
 - Retaining older nurses is crucial to address the national nursing shortage, as well as high cost of nurse turnover
 - Even the simplest compensatory measures help to make the environment more adaptable for the aging nurse i.e.: color coding

Wisdom of the Expert Nurse

- Experienced nurses bring know-how, motivation and commitment
- No hesitation-immediate response to identified problems
- Experienced nurses show great willingness to learn even if challenged by technology
- The young nurses extensive education cannot replicate hands on experience
- Financial loss to the organization when the experience nurse leaves patient care
- Simply said the older generation is needed to train the younger nurses to teach the profession pearls that are not captured in text books
- Confidence to assert themselves in difficult situations

References

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- Barclay, L.(2006). Retaining Older Nurses in Hospital Practice: A Newsmaker Interview with Barbara J. Hatcher, PhD, RN, MPH Medscape Medical News.