

# Onboarding new nursing staff to the Operating Room with the use of an Escape Room

## Introduction

To improve the current onboarding process for new nurses in the operating room, two dedicated nurses with a passion for education developed an innovative online escape room. This interactive approach was created to replace the traditional system of using a binder and sit-down discussions, which often lacked engagement and hands-on application. The online escape room was designed to immerse new nurses in real-world scenarios, promoting problem-solving, teamwork, and critical thinking while also preparing them for the unique challenges of the operating room. Emergency situations were specifically included, helping nurses practice quick decision-making in high-pressure environments. Additionally, the platform provided an opportunity to learn how to operate and turn on critical equipment, ensuring that nurses were comfortable and confident in using the tools they would rely on daily. By incorporating gamified elements, emergency scenarios, and practical training, the new onboarding method not only made learning more dynamic and enjoyable but also helped nurses better retain essential skills and knowledge for their roles.

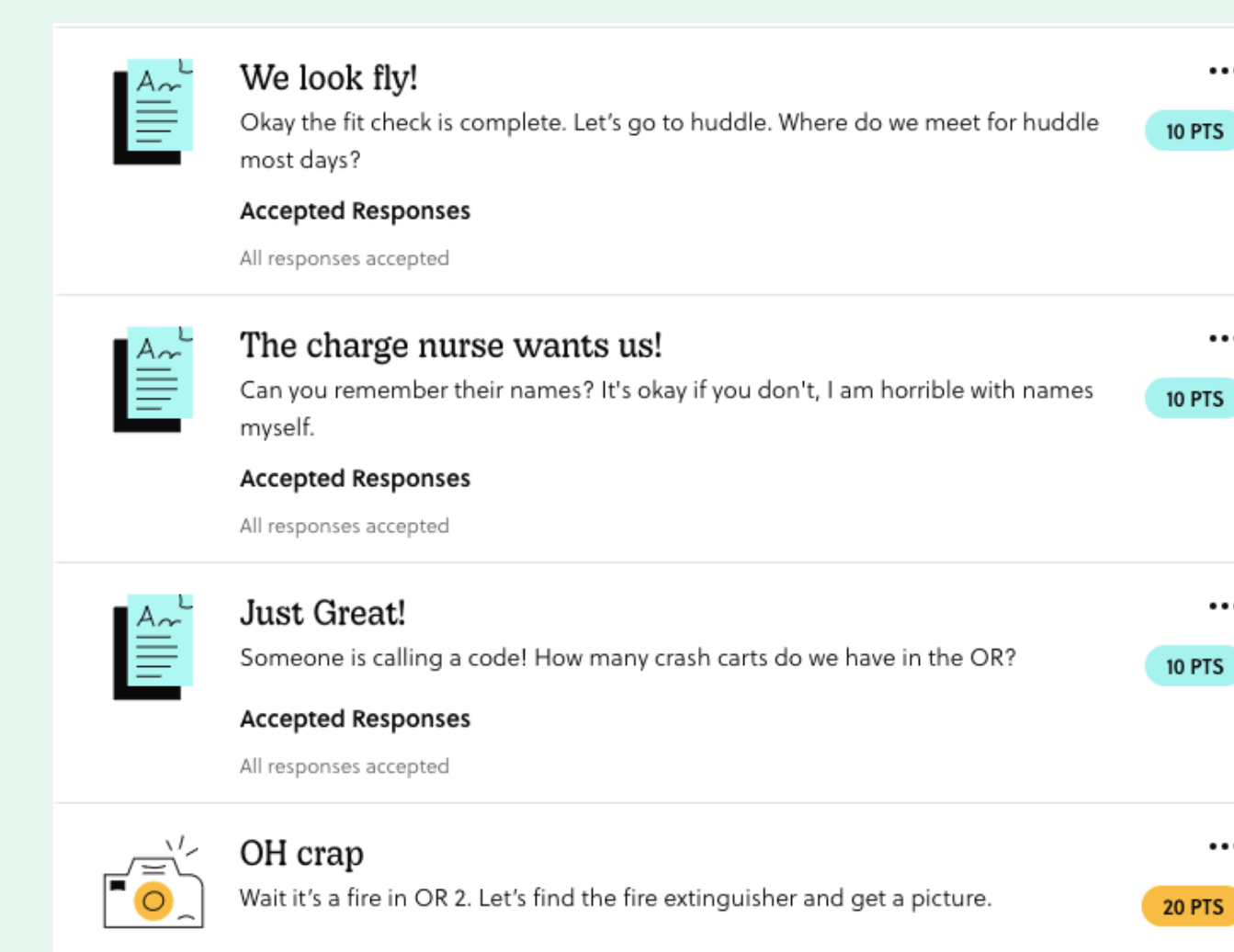
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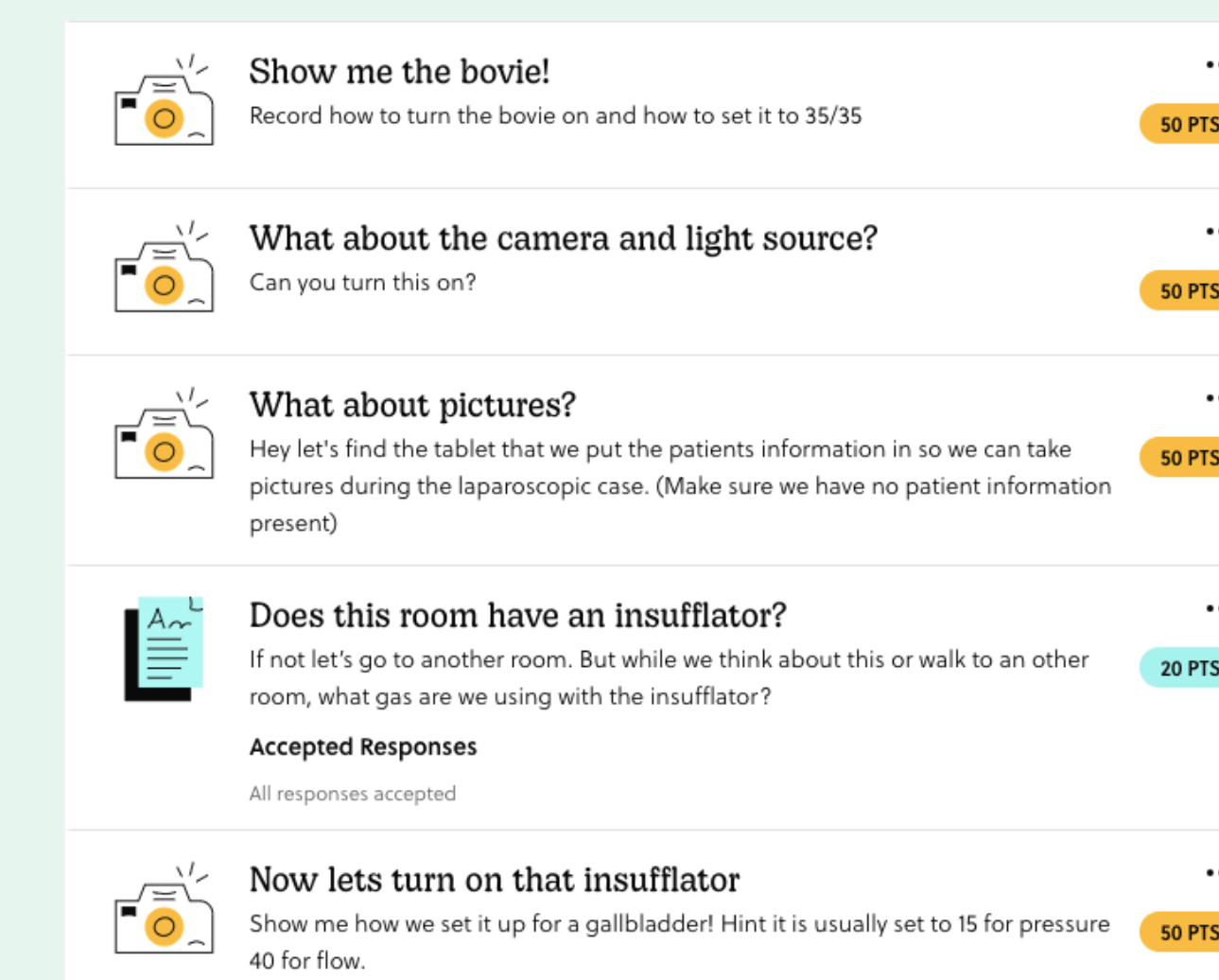
## Methods

The content from the current onboarding binders was transformed into an interactive online escape room portal using a free website, creating a more engaging and practical learning experience for new operating room nurses. As part of orientation, the new nurse also completes the AORN peri-op 101 program, providing foundational perioperative knowledge. Rather than passively reviewing written materials, learners complete missions that require active participation and real-world application of essential information. Points were assigned depending on the type of mission to make the experience more interactive and motivating. Examples include photographing the malignant hyperthermia emergency cart to reinforce its location and contents, typing the emergency call number for rapid recall, and identifying different types of surgical sutures through images. Additional challenges involve learning management team members' names to promote familiarity with leadership and creating videos demonstrating how to operate basic surgical equipment, such as the electrocautery unit. In total, sixty-two missions were created within the escape room portal, and tasks were designed to mirror a typical day in the operating room, building workflow awareness and confidence. This approach was implemented twice—once by each nurse developer with a different orientee—allowing educators to validate its effectiveness in preparing new nurses for the operating room environment.

Examples of missions



Examples of missions



## Results

The results of implementing the online escape room onboarding program were overwhelmingly positive, with new nurses reporting increased confidence in their ability to navigate the operating room environment. Participants expressed greater familiarity with the location of essential equipment and supplies, improved readiness to manage emergency situations, and a clearer understanding of who to contact when assistance was needed. The hands-on, scenario-based missions helped reinforce critical thinking and real-time decision-making, contributing to a smoother transition into daily operating room responsibilities. Due to these successful outcomes, the escape room onboarding program will continue to be used to support new nurses as they learn the operating room. Additionally, a new escape room-style program is currently being developed to further engage and educate experienced nurses, expanding this innovative educational approach across all levels of practice.

## Implications for practice

An online escape room was developed to enhance the existing orientation program and help new nurses feel more confident as they transition into the operating room environment. Designed as an interactive and engaging alternative to traditional onboarding methods, the escape room guides nurses through realistic, scenario-based challenges that mirror daily workflow and critical responsibilities.