

Peri-Operative Team Connection

A resource guide to surviving call

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Background.

The Operating Room is a complex, fast-paced environment where rapid communication and timely access to resources are critical for patient safety. Inconsistent or outdated contact information, unclear escalation pathways, and delays in reaching the correct providers can all lead to confusion and impact patient care.

Recognizing the challenges faced by circulators who are on call alone in the operating room, our team identified a recurring concern: many staff members expressed feeling isolated and unsupported during these shifts. This sense of being "on an island" has contributed to increased anxiety and, in some cases, higher turnover rates.

In response, I collaborated with Faye (OR Charge Nurse) and Karen (Pre-Op Charge Nurse) to develop a comprehensive Resource Guide for On-Call Circulators. This guide was developed to provide OR nurses and staff with a centralized, reliable, and easy-to-use reference to support efficient communication, ensure proper escalation, and reduce delays when urgent decisions are needed. It was also designed with our team in mind: new team members often need additional guidance, and with minimal staff available at times, this guide helps promote autonomy and confidence in decision-making.

Previously, many staff were reaching out to leadership at home for routine questions. By providing this structured reference, we aim to encourage independence, reduce unnecessary after-hours calls, and promote a healthier work-life balance for our staff and leadership, while still ensuring that a member of leadership is always available on call for urgent situations.

This approach is supported by the Association of perioperative Registered Nurses (AORN), which emphasizes the importance of standardized communication tools and structured resource guides in enhancing staff autonomy, reducing errors, and fostering a safer surgical environment (AORN, 2022).



Methods.

The development of the Operating Room Call Resource Book was a collaborative project between the OR Charge Nurse, Pre-op Charge Nurse, and Nurse Manager. Together, we identified the need for a centralized guide and worked with frontline staff to determine what information would be most useful.

- We asked for team input on what they wanted included.
- Common requests included: escalation pathways, ICU bed request process, booking cases, and access to policies.
- Based on this feedback, we created a binder containing the requested information, organized for quick reference.
- The book is designed to be a living document that is updated regularly to ensure accuracy and relevance.

This collaborative, staff-driven approach not only ensures that the resource book meets the practical needs of the team, but also promotes ownership, engagement, and autonomy.

Recommendations and Next Steps

1. Ongoing Updates
 - Assign responsibility (OR Charge Nurse, Pre-op Charge Nurse, or delegate) for reviewing and updating the Call Book weekly.
 - Incorporate changes in on-call schedules, policy updates, and escalation protocols promptly.
2. Staff Education & Orientation
 - Introduce the Call Book during new staff orientation.
 - Provide annual refreshers for all OR staff to ensure continued familiarity and correct use.
3. Integration with Digital Resources
 - Develop a digital version accessible via the hospital intranet or QR code at key OR workstations.
 - Link directly to policies, escalation pathways, and on-call schedules.
4. Feedback & Continuous Improvement
 - Establish a feedback loop (suggestion box, huddle discussions, anonymous survey) to capture team input.
 - Conduct quarterly reviews to incorporate staff feedback and ensure relevance.
5. Leadership Support
 - Maintain leadership availability for urgent concerns but reinforce autonomy by directing routine questions to the Call Book.
 - Celebrate staff who use the resource effectively to promote a culture of independence and shared responsibility.

References.

- American Nurses Association (ANA, 2022) emphasizes that shared decision-making and collaboration in policy/practice development improve staff satisfaction, promote autonomy, and strengthen team effectiveness.
- Institute of Medicine (IOM, 2021) – The Future of Nursing Report highlights the importance of empowering nurses to take active roles in designing systems that support safe, high-quality care.