

ORNAC Standards of the Month

September 2020

Surgical counts are a topic that is forwarded to the ORNAC Standards Committee on a frequent basis. The surgical count is a team responsibility and perioperative nurses are responsible for ensuring all surgical items, including instruments, sponges, sharps, and other miscellaneous items are accounted for, prior to the patient leaving the operating room.

Each Healthcare Organization should have policy and procedures regarding how to conduct the surgical counts. These policies and procedures should include, but are not limited to:

- provincial/territorial documentation standards;
- standardized process for counting,
- actions to be taken in the event of count discrepancy;
- process for managing a count in an emergency situation where a count cannot be completed;
- process for documentation in case where there is therapeutic packing; and
- critical periods when a count cannot be performed.

What you asked about...	Standards Committee recommendation...	Where to find more information...
Change over count <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direction on how to manage multiple change over counts when staff are permanently relieved at different times. 	Adjust workflow to avoid multiple staff changeovers in short periods. Consider changing over the scrub and circulating nurses at the same time to limit multiple change over counts.	Section 3.15 Surgical Count Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3.15.1 • 3.15.19 • 3.15.20
Documentation of the surgical count <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using electronic and paper count sheets. Do the paper sheets need to be kept? 	If paper count sheets are used then they should remain as part of the patient’s permanent health record, which may include having them scanned into the electronic health record.	Section 3.15 Surgical Count Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3.15.30-3.15.39 Documentation
Variability of non-counted items on sterile field between facilities?	Any item that has the potential to be retained should be counted. Healthcare organizations should have policy and procedure to outline what, and in what situation items are counted.	Section 3.15 Surgical Count Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3.15.2 • 3.15.3 • 3.15.11