



## **Patient Advocacy in the Peri-Operative Setting**

“I like my patients to wake up the same way they went to sleep. Legs out of stirrups, covered up and me beside them!” answers Debbie, Peri-operative RN for Gynecology. A candid remark when asked “What does patient advocacy mean to you?”

This same question was posed to staff at morning huddle “What does advocacy mean to you?” The shout-out of words was very similar to what ORNAC standards promote. Words such as dignity, listener, vulnerability, empathy, speaking out, being a spokesperson, were stated.

With the list of words written for all to see, staff felt the one thing we do that may be unique to our Operating Room is the debriefing sessions we have following events, critical incidents or sometimes we are simply asked to hold one. Debrief in the Operating Room was presented at the 2017 ORNAC conference in Niagara with the focus being on staff wellbeing and support. Patient advocacy also factors highly in the debriefing process.

### **The Scenario:**

Surgery is about to proceed, the setup is sterile, efficient and complete. The briefing stage of the Surgical Safety Checklist has taken place. The surgeon is scrubbed and anaesthesia is at head of the bed. The critical moment of “Time Out” occurs. All is well and the surgeon proceeds to cut. Once the skin is full incised, the surgeon comes to the realization that the wrong site is being operated on.

What went wrong?

### **The Debrief... Let’s talk about it.**



Wrong site surgery has occurred. The team speaks to the moment of realization, and then afterwards talking to the patient, re-prepping and re-draping the correct site, so it could be operated on. Each team member speaks with candor, frankness, with no finger pointing or blaming and without fear of recrimination. Each person addresses where the holes in the process could be that would allow a patient incident to happen.

The conversation turns again to the patient.

How can we make sure this does not happen again to our patients? It is decided a working group will be formed to improve the process. As one of the surgeons stated "something good has to come from this."

The debriefing process is our staff advocating for our patients in a manner that expose themselves. But it is about the patient...the present one and the future ones that come through our doors. "Debriefing has changed our culture" our Medical Director states.

This important initiative has empowered staff to advocate for and protect the patient. This advocacy results in the change necessary for the next patient. Advocating for the patient has become a Standard of Care when our Peri-operative nurses willingly and with passion, participate in the debriefing sessions.

As one of our RNs stated, "It's is the most important initiative we have ever undertaken in the Operating Room."



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