

The Perioperative  
Care Collaborative

# Position statement



## Delegation: the support worker in the **scrub role**





# Delegation: the Support Worker in the scrub role

**CAVEAT** This position statement is supplementary to *Optimising the Contribution of the Perioperative Support Worker: Delegation and duty of care to patients* (PCC June 2004) and seeks to provide particular guidance regarding delegation of the scrub role to support workers.

In reading this position statement, the term Support Worker (SW) should be regarded as interchangeable with that of Auxiliary and Health Care Assistant.

## Introduction and general principles

The aim of this position statement is to set out principles, which the Perioperative Care Collaborative (PCC) consider should be adhered to by employing organisations and registered professionals, when delegating the scrub role to SWs, to ensure quality patient care within clinical governance frameworks and to promote public safety and protection.

Perioperative practice is unpredictable and demands skilled assistance. From this premise, the PCC are of the view that the Registered Practitioner remains responsible for the overall management of the patient's care and that SWs should undertake the scrub role for elective procedures only.

The PCC are of the view that the minimum underpinning knowledge and competence that the SW must demonstrate to perform the scrub role, be in line with National Occupational Standards for Perioperative Care and assessed via National Qualification Frameworks. Training programmes developed in isolation by individual organisations lack independent external scrutiny via authorised Quality Assurance

processes. This is regarded as inconsistent with standards for regulation and approval, which are fundamental in promoting quality care and public confidence. From this premise, the PCC does not accept that in-house programmes are adequate for the training of support workers to fulfill the scrub role.

## PCC standards and recommended practice

Support Workers fulfilling the scrubbed role must be working towards or have complete a National Occupational Standard Scrub Specific Unit at N/SVQ Level 3, having first completed the essential N/SVQ Level 3 units to secure the Perioperative Care Award.

When a Support Worker is fulfilling the scrub role:

- all swab, instrument and needle counts must be conducted with a Registered Practitioner as a second checker
- a Registered Practitioner should be present in the immediate environment for the duration of the operative procedure

- a Registered Practitioner must complete the patient record of care and contribute to all standard record keeping, eg: swab count

The scrub role involves both skill and a set of judgements to protect the patient intra-operatively. Changes in patient condition or, equally, in the planned operative procedure, requires application of knowledge and rapid response to minimise harm to the patient and/or deterioration in condition/patient dependency.

For this reason, it is recommended that principles of risk management are applied to determine the range of elective procedures, for which SWs may perform the scrub role.

It is recommended that employing organisations develop a departmental policy that details agreed operative procedures to be undertaken by support workers.

It is regarded as essential that, where the support worker is fulfilling the scrub role, it is identified in their individual job description/specification.

The employer must develop processes for regularly monitoring the competency of all staff so as to inform personal development plans and ongoing training needs.



