

# Beyond the red line – Changing the learning ecosystem to promote perioperative specialisation in novice nurses

Jennifer Lohan, Perioperative NE, WSLHD [Jennifer.Lohan@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Jennifer.Lohan@health.nsw.gov.au)

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### Responding to need

Perioperative nursing is a complex specialty. Recruitment and retention of a skilled perioperative workforce continues to be a challenge, with experienced perioperative nurses in short supply both nationally and internationally<sup>1</sup>. WSLHD is also experiencing massive redevelopment, expansion of facilities and services.

WSLHD has responded to this challenge by developing the Transition to Perioperative Practice (T2P) program as a recruitment and retention strategy to improve the confidence of nurses entering this dynamic and challenging environment.

The program is currently offered to Registered Nurses (RNs) with no prior experience (novice) in perioperative nursing, and is aimed at improving patient and staff safety during the transition period into this complex setting.

From the 2017 and 2018 cohorts, 25 perioperative nurses have now completed the T2P program and remain in perioperative roles across WSLHD.

In 2019, 19 novices RNs commenced the T2P program.

## 2. DESIGN

### Stakeholder engagement to develop a cohesive design

Workforce and forecasting data was used to guide the WSLHD Surgical Safety Taskforce in identifying a need to increase the perioperative nursing workforce. The recommendation was to develop a WSLHD wide program to support the recruitment of graduating Transition to Practice (TPP) nurses, and existing RNs interested in working within this specialty.

Consultation and collaboration with the Perioperative Clinical Nurse Consultant, WSLHD perioperative Nurse Managers, Nurse Unit Managers and educators guided development of the program. The final product was a 12 month structured program, which includes a WSLHD wide 4-day on-campus orientation, skills based training and ongoing face-to-face tutorials.

Participants are allocated to work in main operating suites within WSLHD during their program. They are allocated 6 months at either Auburn, Blacktown or Mount Druitt, and 6 months at Westmead.

The 4 day Perioperative Orientation is conducted at a central location, and conducted in February, March & May each year. Access to these training sessions is also offered to current staff in perioperative roles within imaging and endoscopy, Ambulatory Surgery Unit and perioperative New Grads/GradStart nurses.

Facility based orientation is provided at the commencement of each rotation. This has been mostly standardised to promote consistency across WSLHD.



## LEARNING ECOSYSTEM

## 4. EVALUATION & Next Steps

### Use of the PDSA cycle to ensure quality

Each program has been reviewed using the PDSA (Plan, Do, Study, Act) cycle to enhance future iterations.

Stakeholder feedback is obtained via face to face sessions and Survey Monkey. This information is used to guide early identification of areas for quality improvement.

Evaluation using 360° surveys are conducted after each on-campus orientation and at the completion of each program. Information obtained guides further improvements, which is evidenced by improved staff retention and learner experience.

Planning and implementation of improvements such as changes to selection and recruitment processes, and moving to a 'streamed' approach for enhanced skill development has resulted from these quality improvement processes.

#### Next steps:

- Approval is currently being sought to conduct the program in 2020. This will commence the recruitment cycle for the program.
- Ongoing review and refinement of the program is being conducted, to ensure it meets organizational and learner needs.

## 3. PATHWAYS

### Streams approach to meet workforce deficiencies

The 2017 (first) iteration of the program required participants to complete all nursing roles: Instrument, Circulating, Anaesthetics and Post Anaesthesia Care Unit (PACU) nursing rotations.

After evaluating the program using feedback from participants and their managers, this was altered to a 'streamed' approach with participants now completing either the Anaesthetics & PACU nurse 'stream', or Instrument & Circulating nurse 'stream' to maximize the learning, development and consolidation of skills in these highly specialty areas.

## FOUNDATIONS

### Consistency and quality of training

Rostered supernumerary support is scheduled at the commencement of each specialty, with preceptors providing support for the development and integration of participants into each area.

Learning is enhanced by the completion of the mandatory Ministry of Health *Transition to Perioperative Practice Program: Participant Resource Manual and Clinical Skills and Performance Assessments* relevant to each specialty being performed. This is aimed at enhancing the development of foundational skills and knowledge and provides consistency of learning across WSLHD.

In 2017 & 2018 additional academic assessments were required to complete the T2P. Assessments were written to Australian Qualifications Framework level 8 to provide evidence to support application for Recognition of Prior Learning into postgraduate study. The aim was to promote lifelong learning. After evaluation this has been reduced to 3 assessments, focusing on critical thinking and enhanced vocational outcomes.



<sup>1</sup> Reference: Health Workforce Australia. 2014. Australia's Future Health Workforce – Nurses. Commonwealth of Australia. Available URL: [https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/34AA7E6FDB8C16AAC257D9500112F25/\\$File/AFHW%20-%20Nurses%20detailed%20report.pdf](https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/34AA7E6FDB8C16AAC257D9500112F25/$File/AFHW%20-%20Nurses%20detailed%20report.pdf)