

Spotlight on the ODP.....



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Theatre Practitioner reveals all

What IS an ODP?

The Operating Department Practitioner works predominantly behind the doors of theatres which is why many people are unaware of the role. The work consists of three main areas:

1. Anaesthetics - supporting and assisting the anaesthetist during the peri operative journey
2. Scrub - supporting and assisting the surgeons with instrumentation during surgery
3. Recovery - overseeing the immediate care of a patient post operatively, maintaining airway support, pain management and observations during the emergence phase of anaesthesia

If you've ever been present at a cardiac arrest or trauma call, it's likely that an ODP was present as they make up part of these teams. The ODP professional skills are not limited to clinical as many ODPs have progressed in to management roles or strategic roles of which several of the trusts General Managers are ODPs by profession and not just those linked to surgical specialties.

All of these roles are directly linked to improve patient care, promote patient safety and uphold professional integrity.

THE PAST

The role of the ODP is one of the oldest healthcare professions with origins going back to the birth of modern surgery in the 18th Century. During the 18th and 19th Centuries the theatre team primarily consisted of men as the absence of anaesthesia required physical strength and the archaic view that surgery was too gruesome for women. These teams consisted of;

Surgeons

'Box boys' - who carried and cleaned equipment
'Surgical Beadle' - who assisted the surgeon, made sure the iron was kept hot to cauterize bleeding and transported patients to theatres

The contribution that these men had on the early days of surgery is still linked to practices today. Did you know the only surgical instrument that is used in 100% of all surgical procedures was invented by a Surgical Beadle? The Rampley Sponge holder, used to clean and disinfect skin prior to surgery, was invented by Joseph Rampley (1845 - 1934), Chief Surgical Beadle at the Royal London Hospital.

With the outbreak of World War 1, many of the Box Boys, Beadles and Handlers were drafted to the front lines which resulted in the recruitment of female theatre nurses. The three roles were eventually amalgamated into Operating Theatre Technicians (OTTs). These were usually men who worked alongside the newly emerging specialty of anaesthesia and performed the Handler role. Due to the growing influence of the established 'theatre nurse' role, the OTT struggled to gain recognition as an essential component of the operating theatre.

In the 1970's, a review of staffing in theatres recognised the advanced technical skills and knowledge of OTTs but reported major inconsistencies with the training. The first national training program for OTTs was introduced (re-titled as Operating Department Assistants) via the City & Guilds qualification and then to an NVQ. A few years later to a Higher National Diploma and finally to a Bachelor Degree in 2007.

THE PRESENT

The ODP attends a 3 year degree course working with student nurses and midwives throughout their studies.

Many of the lectures are shared. The skills and competencies developed through practice placements (with the exception of a ward based placement and an ED placement) are all within the operating theatre making ODPs job ready from the moment they gain their registration.

In 2004, ODPs achieved professional recognition with the HCPC and in 2017 were finally inducted into the AHP family. There are currently 14,000 registered ODPs on the HCPC register, making it one of the smaller professional groups.

THE FUTURE

The future of the role looks bright too! With plans in 2020 for ODPs to be granted PGDs for medications with prescribing rights coming along in the future; progression to Physician Associates in both surgery and anaesthetics and Surgical Care Practitioners!