A Descriptive Study of the Surgical Nurse Liaison's Role from the Perspectives of Patients and Their Families in Alleviating Anxiety During a Surgical Procedure

Reginald P. Fernandez, MS, RN
Disclosure

**Author:** Reginald P. Fernandez, MS, RN

**Session Goal:** To recognize the relationship formed by a Surgical Nurse Liaison (SNL) with patients and their families that makes an impact on the quality of their perioperative experience.

**Session Objectives:**
1. To identify the five themes related to specialized practices of the SNL across the perioperative continuum.
2. To evaluate whether the role of a SNL in the perioperative area alleviates patients’ and families’ anxiety and improves their experience during a surgical procedure.

**Conflicts of Interest:** None

**Employer:** Northshore LIJ Health System

**Sponsorship / Commercial Support:** None
Background

A focused clinical question from my clinical practice.
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Perioperative Department
NYU Hospital for Joint Diseases

- 40-50 Surgical Cases Daily
- Minor sports injuries to complex spinal fusions
- Located on the 1st and 2nd levels below the main lobby
- 16 Operating Rooms, 2 Recovery & Holding Rooms,
  - 1 Pre-Admitting, 1 Waiting Room
- Operating Hours 8am to 8pm
Relevance of the Study

• Patient and family experiences become more stressful because of the many activities, various staff, different situations, and fragmented communication they encounter (Stefan, 2010).
• Anxiety arises because of the brooding, thinking, worry, and fear regarding the upcoming surgery (Cooke et al., 2004).
• Ineffective and inadequate communications are linked to higher levels of stress and anxiety and can also result in an overall feeling of dissatisfaction with hospital care (Stephen-Woods, 2003).
• Dissatisfaction with care and associated anxiety grows when family members become frustrated with gaps in information (Munday et al, 2012).
• Family members are still restricted from the PACU despite the support and advocacy of the ASPAN to encourage family visitation (Carter et al., 2012).
• The involvement of families as active partners in a patient's healthcare process would promote better clinical outcomes and fewer complications while in the hospital (Nelson, 2008).
• Anxiety and its effects weaken the patients' and families' confidence in the nurses, the doctors, the healthcare teams, and the institution (Lalani, 2013).
• An excellent perioperative experience is a result of a well-maintained high quality process of communication along with a true therapeutic relationship with the healthcare team (Mitchell, 2000b).
The Surgical Nurse Liaison

SLN

Patient & Family

Theory of Caring

Patient Experience
Research Initiative

- Understand the role of a Surgical Nurse Liaison (SNL).
- Evaluate whether the role of a SNL in the perioperative area alleviates patients' and families' anxiety and improves their experience during a surgical procedure.

Review of the Literature

- Lack of evidence-based interventions for decreasing patient anxiety during perioperative services.
- A study found that a perioperative nurse could significantly decrease patients' anxiety through emotional interventions such as education and effective communication.
- Stathopoulou, Latimer, & Dibble (2012) found that providing information to patients reduced anxiety.
- Patients in a study by Stathopoulou, Latimer, & Dibble (2012) showed lower anxiety levels than those in the control group.
- Patients who received perioperative education had lower anxiety levels than those who did not.
- Stathopoulou, Latimer, & Dibble (2012) conducted a study on the positive effects of the Liaison nurse team in reducing preoperative anxiety.
- Results indicated that patients whose doctor recommended a Liaison nurse were more likely to experience less anxiety than those who were not discharged when the Liaison nurse was not involved.

- Cunningham, et al. (2002) developed a daily/weekly program to improve information exchange.
- Effective communication was achieved through the Liaison nurse, with nurses who received the Liaison nurse showing significant improvements in anxiety levels.
- Cunningham, et al. (2002) found that the Liaison nurse reduced anxiety levels through effective communication and support.
Method

- A qualitative study using a descriptive approach to describe the participant's perceptions, opinions, or attitudes.
- Approval granted by NYU Department of Research and Education. IRB not required.

Setting
- Study conducted over 3 weeks in February & March 2014. Operating Hours 8am to 8pm.

Participants
- Various types of outpatients surgical cases
- 6 Patients & 6 Family Members (10% ADC)
- 30 minutes to 2 hour length of surgical procedures

Procedures
- Patients and families were invited
- Conducted non-participatory observations
- In-depth interview conducted separately
- 10-15 minutes in a secluded area
- 9 open-ended interview questions
Five themes were identified:

- Acts as an Agent of Cultural Change and Engages Patients & Family Members in the Surgical Process
- Acts as an Agent of the Organization in Improving the Perioperative Experience
- Connects to Patients & Families by Bringing Comfort and Humanity to their Experiences & by Reducing Anxiety
- Situates the Patient in an Unfamiliar World
- Navigates the System with the Best Interests of the Patients & their Family Members in Mind
Findings:
Implications for Practice

- These findings support the idea that the provision of timely updates can satisfy both practical and emotional needs of waiting family members.
- This study delineates the role of the SNL as a personal, caring, and individualized intervention in managing the anxiety of both patients and family members.

Recommendations

- The expansion in other patient care areas would benefit from further research and heighten patients and families' awareness of the SNL role.
- Surveys specific to how the SNL assists in providing support & collaboration to other perioperative team members must be considered.
- Surveys to investigate the perspectives of other nurses to define how the SNL role interfaces with their responsibilities.
- A cost analysis study of the effects on efficiency, outcomes, and patient satisfaction scores would benefit the organization.
References: