Orientation to the Operating Room
Glossary of Terms

**Acuity:**
The complexity of care given in the operating room.

**Agency:**
An establishment engaged in providing health care.

**Airborne Precautions:**
Precautions that reduce the risk of an airborne transmission of infectious airborne droplet nuclei particle.

**Alcohol-based Preparations:**
Products used for hand antisepsis that increasingly are being used as an alternative to the traditional surgical hand scrub using detergent-based antiseptic agents. Formulations include foams and liquid rinses. These products do not remove soil; therefore, application must be preceded by a soap and water wash when used by surgical team members.

**Ambient Air:**
The surrounding environmental air.

**Anatomical Brush Stroke Scrub Method:**
A scrub method that uses a prescribed number of brush strokes applied lengthwise with the brush or sponge for each surface of the fingers, hands, and arms, to include 30 strokes on the nails and 20 strokes on all other surfaces.

**Anteroom:**
An outer room that leads to another room and that often is used as a waiting room.

**Artificial Nails:**
Substances or devices applied or added to the natural nails to augment or enhance the wearer's own nails. They include, but are not limited to, bondings, tips, wrappings, and tapes.

**Assessment:**
A continuous activity to collect and document data about the patient's health status.

**Barrier Material:**
Material that prevents the penetration of microorganisms, particulates, and fluids.

**Biomedical Services Personnel:**

Those individuals in an institution that are trained and qualified to check, troubleshoot, and repair medical equipment.

**Cellulosic:**

A substance made from cellulose or derived from cellulose, such as linen and paper products.

**Cleaning:**

Removal of all foreign material from objects; must precede disinfection and sterilization procedures. A process using friction, detergent, and water to remove organic debris.

**Competency:**

The knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to fulfill the professional role functions of a registered nurse in the operating room.

**Confine and Contain:**

A principle that recommends prompt cleanup of items contaminated with blood, tissue, or body fluids.

**Contact Precautions:**

Precautions designed to reduce the risk of transmission of epidemiologically important microorganisms by direct or indirect contact.

**Contaminated:**

The presence of potentially infectious pathogenic microorganisms on animate or inanimate objects.

**Critical Item:**

Instruments or objects that are introduced directly into the human body, either into or in contact with the blood stream or normally sterile areas of the body; an item that enters sterile tissue or the vascular system.

**Decontamination:**

Any physical or chemical process that serves to reduce the number of microorganisms on any inanimate object to render that object safe for subsequent handling.

**Diagnosis:**

The identification of patient problems, actual or potential, that are amenable to intervention by the perioperative nurse.
**Disinfection:**
A process that destroys some forms of microorganisms, excluding bacterial spores.

**Droplet Precautions:**
Precautions that reduce the risk of large particle droplet transmission of infectious agents.

**Electrosurgery:**
The cutting and coagulation of body tissue with a high radio frequency current.

**Electrosurgical Unit:**
For the purposes of this document, the ESU is defined as the generator; the foot switch with cord (if applicable); and the electrical plug, cord, and connections.

**End-of-procedure Cleaning:**
Cleaning that is performed at the end of one surgical procedure before the start of another surgical procedure in the same room.

**Event-related Sterility:**
Shelf life based on the quality of the packaging material, storage conditions during transportation, and amount of handling of item.

**Exogenous:**
From a source other than the patient (e.g., personnel, equipment, the environment, instruments, supplies).

**Exposure Incident to Pathogens:**
Specific eye, mouth, or other mucous membranes; non-intact skin; or parenteral contact with blood or other potentially infectious materials that results from the performance of an employees duties.

**Facilities:**
Buildings and fixed and movable equipment.

**Fire/Flame Retardant:**
A material that does not support combustion without an external source of heat such as a laser.

**Foam Surgical Scrub Products:**
Scrub agents that are mixed with air as they are dispensed through a specialized nozzle. Some may be applied by rubbing onto dry skin, others by applying to wet skin.
Goal:
An expected outcome; a statement of what the nurse expects to observe, hear, or see demonstrated by the patient at a given point in time.

Hands-free or No-touch Technique:
Instrument transfer between the scrub person and the surgeon that ensures that neither ever touches the same sharp instrument at the same time. Instruments can be placed in a neutral zone between the scrub person and the surgeon.

Healthcare Personnel:
Individuals directly involved with patient care.

Heat-sealed Patch:
A patch sealed by heat and occasionally referenced as a "double-vulcanized patch."

High Level Disinfection:
A process that destroys all microorganisms, with the exception of high numbers of bacterial spores. High-level disinfectants have the capability of inactivation of hepatitis B virus, HIV, and Mycobacterium tuberculosis. High-level disinfectants do not inactivate the virus-like prion that causes Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease.

High Risk:
Patients at risk if the aspect of care is not provided correctly and in a timely manner.

Hospital Disinfectant:
A chemical germicide with label claims for effectiveness against Salmonella choleraesuis, Staphylococcus aureus, and Pseudomonas aeruginosa. Hospital disinfectants may be either low-level, intermediate-level, or high-level disinfectants.

Infectious Waste:
Medical waste (eg, blood, body fluids, sharps) that is capable of producing infectious diseases.

Instruments:
Surgical tools or devices designed to perform a specific function, such as cutting; dissecting, grasping, holding, retracting, or suturing.

Intermediate-level Disinfection:
A process that inactivates Mycobacterium tuberculosis, vegetative bacteria, most viruses, and most fungi, but does not necessarily kill bacterial spores.

**Intraoperative:**

The time begins when the patient is transferred to the operating room bed and ends when he or she is admitted to the post-anesthesia area.

**Invasive Procedures:**

The surgical entry into tissues, cavities, or organs or repair of major traumatic injuries.

**Laser:**

A device that produces an intense, coherent, directional beam of light by stimulating electronic or molecular transitions to lower energy levels. An acronym for "light amplification by stimulated emission of radiation."

**Laser-generated Airborne Contaminants:**

Particles, toxins, and steam produced by vaporization of target tissues.

**Latex Allergy:**

A systemic or local allergic response to various latex proteins to which the individual has been sensitized.

**Leaded Apron:**

A leaded-rubber material worn to protect personnel from scattered radiation.

**Low-level Disinfection:**

A process that kills most bacteria, some viruses, and some fungi, but cannot be relied on to kill resistant microorganisms such as tubercle bacilli or bacterial spores.

**Maximum Permissible Exposure:**

The level of laser radiation to which a person may be exposed without hazardous effects or adverse biologic changes in his or her eyes or skin.

**Monopolar Electrosurgery:**

A surgical procedure in which only the active electrode is in the surgical wound-electrosurgery that directs electrical current through the patient's body and requires the use of a dispersive electrode.

**Nominal Hazard Zone:**
The space in which the level of the direct, reflected, or scattered radiation used during normal laser operation exceeds the applicable maximum permissible exposure. Exposure levels beyond the boundary of the nominal hazard zone should be below the appropriate maximum permissible exposure level of the laser. Special eye and skin precautions must be enforced.

**Noncritical:**

Instruments or items that come in contact with the patient, but in most instances only with unbroken skin.

**Nonviable Tissue:**

Tissue that is nonliving.

**Nonwoven Materials:**

Combination of processed cellulosic and synthetic fibers randomly oriented in sheets and held with binders, or fabrics produced by bonding fibers. They are designed as single-use materials.

**No-touch Technique:**

The use of an extension such as a sponge forceps, rather than hands, to handle or touch contaminated items or to handle sterile items.

**Nursing Diagnosis:**

A concise, explicit statement of the patient's health status, based on nursing assessment and amenable to nursing intervention.

**Nursing Intervention:**

Those activities performed by the nurse to meet expected patient outcomes.

**Nursing Process:**

A systematic approach to nursing practice utilizing problem solving techniques. The major components of the nursing process, are assessment, diagnosis, outcome identification, planning, implementation, and evaluation.

**Occupational Dose:** Limits of radiation in a year.

Present annual exposure limits are:

whole-body exposure (including gonads, lenses of eyes, and bone marrow): 5,000 rem;

forearms, hands, and feet: 75 rem;

skin of whole body: 30 rem; and
thryoid: 15 rem.

Annual exposure limits since 1994 are:

total-dose equivalent (internal and external combined): 5 rem;
lenses of eyes: 15 rem; and

skin, extremities, and individual organs: 50 rem.

**Operating Room:**
The environment in which the patient's surgical procedure is performed.

**Operating Room Nurse:**
A registered nurse who assumes the perioperative role in providing care to patients experiencing surgical intervention.

**Operating Room Services:** All activities related to the functions of the operating room.

**Organic Debris:** Blood, tissue, and body fluids.

**Packaging Systems:**
A generic term meant to include all types of packaging such as woven or non-woven wraps, pouches, and rigid container systems.

**Peel Package:**
A flexible bag or receptacle used to package items for sterilization.

**Peer Review:**
The examination and evaluation by associates of a nurse's clinical nursing practice. Individuals are evaluated by written standards.

**Perioperative:**
Surrounding the operative and other invasive experience (i.e., before, during, and after).

**Perioperative Nursing Care:**
The nursing activities that address the needs of patients, their families, and significant others that occur preoperatively, intraoperatively, and postoperatively.

**Perioperative Period:**
Time commencing with the decision for surgical intervention and ending with a follow-up home/clinic evaluation. This period includes the preoperative, intraoperative, and postoperative phases.

**Personal Protective Equipment:**

Personal protective equipment for standard precautions includes intact gloves, gowns, masks, and eye protection (e.g., face shields, goggles, glasses with side shields).

**Personnel:**

Paid or unpaid health care workers, students, volunteers, physicians, and others who may have direct patient contact or opportunity for exposure to patients or devices, supplies, or equipment used for patients.

**Pneumatic:**

Pertaining to gas or air; filled with compressed gas or air.

**Positioning Device:**

Any device or piece of equipment used for positioning the patient and/or providing maximum anatomic exposure.

**Postoperative:**

The time begins with admission to the post anesthesia care area and ends with a resolution of surgical sequelae.

**Potentially Infectious Material:**

Blood; all body fluids, secretions, and excretions except sweat, regardless of whether they contain visible blood; nonintact skin; mucous membranes; and airborne, droplet, and contact-transmitted epidemiologically important pathogens.

**Preoperative:**

The time begins when the decision for surgical intervention is made and ends with the transference of the patient to the operating room bed.

**Process:**

Activities of the nurse or the process of nursing. Includes those functions carried out by practitioners, such as assessment, planning, treatments, indications for procedure and treatments, technical aspects of performing treatment, and management of complications.

**Pulse Duration:**
The duration of a laser pulse; usually measured as the time interval between the half-power points on the leading and training edges of the laser pulse.

Rad:
Radiation absorbed dose.

Reassessment:
A review of each or any stage of the nursing process because of changing data. This may require a new assessment and a modified care plan.

Regulated Medical Waste:
Sharps (both used and unused), cultures and stocks of infectious agents, carcasses and bedding of animals inoculated with infectious agents, select isolation waste from patients having diseases caused by so-called Class 4 etiologic agents, pathological waste, and human blood.

Reposable:
An instrument that has limited use or an instrument with a combination of reusable and disposable components.

Resident Microorganisms:
Microorganisms persistently isolated from most people's skin. These microorganisms are considered to be permanent residents of the skin and are not readily removed by mechanical friction.

Rigid Container System:
Specifically designed heat-resistant metal, plastic, or anodized aluminum receptacles used to package items, usually surgical instruments, for sterilization. The lids and/or bottom surfaces contain steam or gas permeable, high-efficiency microbial filters.

Scatter Radiation:
Radiation is scattered when an x-ray beam strikes a patient's body, as it passes through the patient's body, and as it strikes surrounding structures (e.g., walls, OR furniture).

Scrub Attire:
Clothing worn in the OR that consists of a two-piece pantsuit made especially for the practice setting.

Semi-critical Item:
An item that comes in contact with mucous membranes or with skin that is not intact.

Sequential Wrapping:
A double-wrapping procedure that creates a package within a package.

**Sharps:**
Sharps include, but are not limited to, suture needles, scalpel blades, hypodermic needles, electrosurgical needles and blades, safety pins, and instruments with sharp edges or points.

**Simultaneous Wrapping:**
Wrapping with two sheets of wrap at the same time using typical wrapping methods.

**Sponges:**
Sponges are items (i.e., gauze pads, cottonoids, peanuts, dissectors, laparotomy sponges) used to absorb fluids, protect tissues, and/or apply pressure or traction.

**Standard:**
A criterion used by general agreement to determine whether something is as it should be. An agreed-upon level of excellence. An established norm determined by opinion, authority, research, and/or theory.

**Standard Precautions:**
The primary strategy for successful nosocomial infection control and reduction of worker exposure; precautions used for care of all patients regardless of their diagnosis or presumed infectious status.

**Sterilization:**
The process of destroying all microorganisms on a substance by exposure to physical and chemical agents; the complete elimination of all forms of microbial life.

**Sterilization Process Monitoring Device:**
(formerly known as a chemical indicator): A device used to monitor certain parameters of a sterilization process by means of a characteristic color change (e.g., chemically treated paper, pellet sealed in a glass tube, pressure-sensitive tape).

**Strike-through:**
Penetration of microorganisms, particulates, or fluids through a fabric.

**Substerile Area:**
Acts as a service area between two or more operating or procedure rooms and may be equipped with a flash sterilizer, warming cabinet, sterile supply storage, and small sink.

**Superheating:**
Occurs when dehydrated fabrics are subjected to steam sterilization. The temperature of the fabric exceeds that of the surrounding steam. The package or product becomes too dry and causes destructive effects on the strength of the cloth fibers. This may lead to a biological false positive test.

**Surgical Attire:**

Nonsterile surgical apparel items designated for the OR practice setting that include the two-piece pantsuit, cover jackets, head coverings, shoes, masks, protective eyewear, and other protective barriers.

**Surgical Hand Scrub:**

The process of removing as many microorganisms as possible from the hands and forearms by mechanical washing and chemical anti-sepsis before participating in a surgical procedure.

**Surgical Hand Scrub Agent:**

A broad-spectrum, fast-acting, persistent, and nonirritating preparation containing an antimicrobial ingredient designed to significantly reduce the number of microorganisms on the intact skin.

**Surgical Suite:**

An area including the operating rooms that may also contain support facilities.

**Terminal Cleaning:**

Cleaning that is performed at the completion of surgical practice settings' daily surgery schedules. Terminal cleaning is performed in surgical procedure rooms and scrub/utility areas, which include, but are not limited to, surgical lights and external tracks, fixed and ceiling-mounted equipment, all furniture (including wheels and casters), equipment, handles of cabinets and push plates, ventilation face plates, horizontal surfaces (e.g., tops of counters, autoclaves, fixed shelving), the entire floor, kick buckets, and scrub sinks.

**Transient Microorganisms:**

Microorganisms isolated from the skin but not demonstrated to be consistently present in the majority of people. Such microorganisms are considered to be transient but are of concern because they can be readily transmitted on hands unless removed by mechanical friction and soap and water washing.

**Transmission-based Precautions:**

Second tier of precautions designed to be used with patients known or suspected to be infected or colonized with highly transmissible or epidemiologically important pathogens for which additional precautions are needed to prevent transmission in the practice setting.

**Ultrasonic Cleaner:**
A processing unit that transmits ultrasonic waves through the cleaning solution in a mechanical process known as cavitation. The sound waves produce tiny air bubbles on instrument surfaces. When the air bubbles implode, they produce a scouring action that cleans the instrument surfaces. Ultrasonic cleaning is particularly effective in removing soil deposits from hard-to-reach areas.

**Used Items:**

Items that are opened for a surgical procedure that may or may not have come in contact with a patient's blood, tissue, or body fluids during surgery.

**Useful Life:**

The anticipated life of a product, such as a woven material, affected by the number of washing cycles and sterilization processes that can occur and yet maintain an acceptable barrier.

**Vestibular Area:**

Area inside the entrance to the surgical suite separating the corridors of the surgical suite from those of the facility.

**Viable Tissue:**

Tissue capable of living.

**Washer/Decontaminator:**

A processing unit that cleans by a spray force action known as impingement. This machine combines a vigorous agitation bath with jet stream air to create underwater turbulence. This unit cleans, decontaminates, and removes excess debris from instruments.

**Washer/Disinfector:**

An automated processing unit that pre-rinses, washes and lubricates, high-level disinfects, and dries a wide variety of surgical products.

**Washer/Sterilizer:**

A processing unit that cleans by a spray-force action known as impingement. This machine combines a vigorous agitation bath with jet-stream air to create underwater turbulence. A sterilization cycle follows the washing cycle.

**Waste Stream:**

Flow of discarded materials and fluids that eventually return to the land, water system, and air.

**Wicking:**

Absorption of a liquid by capillary action along a thread or through the material.
Woven Fabric:

Nondisposable, reusable, memory-free, flexible fabric.