

DENTAL NURSE AS AN INSTRUMENT NURSE IN THE OPERATING SUITE

POLICY AND PROCEDURE[®]

DOCUMENT SUMMARY/KEY POINTS

- The dental nurse performing the role of the instrument nurse in the operating suite must practise within the policies and procedures of the operating suite.
- The Dental nurse will be supported at all times by an experienced perioperative registered nurse who will work in the circulating role.
- There will be no **surgical** scrub necessary for the Dentists and Dental nurses. An antiseptic hand wash is required between cases and after patient contact as per the SCHN Hand Hygiene Practice Guideline.
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) must be worn for every case.

CHANGE SUMMARY

- No major changes – MR18 changed to M18

Approved by:	SCHN Policy, Procedure and Guideline Committee	
Date Effective:	1 st September 2024	Review Period: 3 years
Team Leader:	Clinical Nurse Educators	Area/Dept: Operating Suite

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This Policy / Procedure may be varied, withdrawn or replaced at any time. Compliance with this Policy / Procedure is mandatory.

Introduction

A dental nurse attends the operating suite for elective dental lists and emergency dental cases. Dental nurses are not registered nurses trained in the instrument/circulating nurse role. The dental nurse is supported by an experienced perioperative registered nurse (RN). This RN is responsible for the overall nursing care in the operating room and will perform the role of the circulating nurse throughout the procedure.

Policy and Procedure

1. The dental nurse performing the role of the instrument nurse in the operating suite must practise within the policies and procedures of the Operating Theatre Department.
2. The dental nurse will be supported at all times by an experienced perioperative RN who will work in the circulating role.
3. The theatre will be set up by the RN prior to commencement of the list. The dental nurse can make any adjustments to the room to improve efficiency of the session and/or meet the speciality requirements.
4. The RN will collect sterile equipment and room equipment required for the list using the dental collection book as a reference.
5. The dental nurse will bring any extra equipment not available in the Operating Suite from their department to add to the equipment collection.
6. There will be no **surgical** scrub necessary for the dentists and dental nurses. An antiseptic hand wash is necessary between cases and after patient contact as per the [SCHN Hand Hygiene Practice Guideline](#) (Policy No: 2013-9031 v6).
7. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) must be worn for every case. This includes, but not limited to, a sterile gown, surgical gloves, face mask and protective eyewear.
8. The RN will complete the necessary intraoperative documentation in SurgiNet and all other relevant paperwork for the procedure. The count sheet (M18) must be signed by both the RN as the circulating nurse and the dental nurse as the instrument nurse.
9. The aseptic field will be maintained according to the ACORN standards.
10. The dental nurse will initiate a first count of all accountable items on the count sheet (M18). All items on the tray list are counted by the circulating nurse and dental nurse prior to commencement of the case, and again at the end of each case to ensure all instruments are accounted for.
11. The subsequent counts are to be initiated by the dental nurse for all accountable items on the count sheet (M18).
12. Upon completion of each procedure, the dental nurse will remove all dirty instruments from the operating theatre, clean the instrument trolley, and return all furniture to the operating theatre.
13. At the end of the list, final cleaning of equipment is to be shared amongst the entire team. This includes speciality equipment as well as operating suite furniture.

References:

1. The Australian College of Operating Room Nurses Ltd (ACORN). *Standards for Perioperative Nursing in Australia* 16th ed, Adelaide. South Australia: ACORN; 2020.
2. NSW Health Policy Directive. [Management of Instruments, Accountable Items and Other Items used for Surgery or Procedures](#) (PD2013_054). 2013.
3. The Sydney Children's Hospitals Network (SCHN). Hand Hygiene Practice Guideline (Policy No: 2013-9031 v6). 2019. <https://webapps.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/epolicy/policy/4806>

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