

# Profession: Operating Department Practitioners

## *Roles and responsibilities of the professional*

Operating Department Practitioners (ODP's) work mainly to care for and support people who come into hospital for surgical procedures, undertaken within the Operating Theatre. With modern surgical treatment progressing to walk in surgery, some will work in modern health centres where these types of procedures take place as well as within traditional theatre teams. ODP's have skills in critical care and can/do work to facilitate care in the following areas:

- In the preparation of people for theatre (ward visits/interprofessional working with the ward team and pre assessment clinics).
- Throughout the patient's perioperative journey- in support of the patient, anaesthetist, surgeon and the other professional and non-professional groups represented in the operating theatre (e.g. nurses, radiographers, ancillary staff).
- Onward to theatre recovery, offering the patients initial support/observation following their surgery, prior to the patients return to the ward.

The ODP's role / responsibilities may be summarised as that of ensuring patients safety during the peri-operative period.

## *Modern Perspective*

ODP's are registered with the Health Professions Council (HPC) and come under the direction of the College of Operating Department Practitioners (CODP's) for professional guidance in the UK. Their training takes place in Higher Education Institutions and combines theoretical knowledge and practical skills and provides clinical experience in a range of NHS hospital settings. The programme is normally two years resulting in a Diploma in Higher Education in Operating Department Practice.

The Diploma in Higher Education in Operating Practice has been running since 2003, when it superseded the former National Vocational qualification and other earlier levels of national/local qualification – although these remain registerable awards.

Formal professional registration followed in 2004, with the Health Professions Council, following professional discussions (and voluntary registration) in this vane spanning over 20years.

The Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Operating Department Practice curriculum was launched in April 2011, with the proposed date of national introduction as an award in September 2012. This move will provide parity of qualification with other allied health professions registered with the HPC.

## *Life Long Journey*

ODP's are a valued member of the theatre team and all its outreach perspective, and the post registration opportunities reflect this, with ODP's roles developing so that they do/may work in pre-assessment clinics, intensive care units and accident and emergency departments. The role performed by the ODP is influenced by and tailored to local need.

In operating theatre ODP's support the surgeon and their team. Many are now training to undertake the role of first assistant (advanced scrub practitioner), or (advanced) surgical practitioners carrying out minor surgical procedures; as part of a specialist qualification, and/or BSc or MSc qualification.

ODP's may also, after completion of a BSc, undertake the Masters level of qualification in the role of the non-medical Anaesthetist, a role developed to address the proposed shortfall/difficulty in recruitment of medical staff to this role, but as yet posts in this area are limited.

It is necessary for all ODP's to undertake Continuous Professional Development (CPD) upon qualification, and there are a multitude of opportunities available for the ODP to pursue that relate to their areas of professional interest.