

Crucial Role of the Operation Theatre Scrub Nurse in Breast Cancer Surgery

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Abstract

Breast cancer surgery is a common procedure that required specialized care in the operation theatre. As a nurse in the theatre, it is important to understand the surgical steps involved and the critical role you play in supporting the surgical team. This includes assisting with patient positioning, skin preparation, anesthesia administration, incision, dissection, haemostasis, drain placement, closure, and post-operative care. By providing expert nursing care, you can help ensure a safe and successful procedure, as well as optimize patient outcomes and satisfaction.

Keywords: Breast Cancer Surgery; Operation Theatre Scrub Nurse; Surgical Steps; Instrumentation; Responsibilities; Patient Positioning; Drain Placement.

INTRODUCTION

Breast cancer is one of the most common types of cancer in women worldwide, and surgery is often the primary treatment.¹ Breast cancer surgery can be a complex and delicate procedure that requires a skilled surgical team, including an operation theatre scrub nurse. The scrub nurse plays a crucial role in ensuring the success of the

surgery by managing the surgical field, preparing the instruments and supplies, assisting the surgeon during the procedure, and providing post operative care. In this article, we will discuss the role and responsibilities of the scrub nurse in breast cancer surgery, the steps of the procedure, the instruments required, patient positioning, skin preparation, anaesthesia, incision, dissection, hemostasis, drain placement, closure, and post-operative care.

Role and Responsibilities of the Scrub Nurse

The scrub nurse is an integral part of the surgical team in the operating room. The nurse's primary responsibility is to maintain a sterile field and assist the surgeon during the procedure. The scrub nurse must ensure that all the necessary equipment and supplies are available and in good condition before the surgery begins. The nurse must also confirm the patient's identity and surgical site, and ensure that the patient has been appropriately prepped and draped for the surgery.

During the surgery, the scrub nurse must maintain

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a sterile field, ensuring that all instruments and supplies remain sterile through out the procedure. The nurse must also assist the surgeon by passing instruments and supplies as needed, anticipating the surgeon's needs, and keeping the surgical site clear of debris and blood. The scrub nurse must also monitor the patient's vital signs and assist with anaesthesia management, as required.

Surgical Steps

Breast cancer surgery can involve a variety of procedures, such as lumpectomy, mastectomy, and breast reconstruction.² The scrub nurse must be familiar with the specific steps of each procedure and assist the surgeon as needed. The steps typically involve patient positioning, skin preparation, anaesthesia, incision, dissection, haemostasis, drain placement, closure, and postoperative care.

Patient Positioning

The patient's position during breast cancer surgery depends on the type of procedure being performed. For a lumpectomy, the patient is typically placed in a supine position with the affected breast exposed.³ For a mastectomy, the patient is often placed in a lateral decubitus position with the affected breast elevated. The patient's arms are typically secured to prevent accidental movement during the procedure.

Skin Preparation

Skin preparation is a critical step in breast cancer surgery. The scrub nurse must ensure that the surgical site is clean and free of any contaminants before the surgery begins. This involves scrubbing the skin with an antiseptic solution and applying a sterile drape to the surgical site.

Instruments Required Breast cancer surgery requires a variety of instruments and supplies. The scrub nurse must ensure that all the necessary equipment is available and in good condition before the surgery begins. Some of the essential instruments include scalpels, forceps, retractors, scissors, and electrocautery devices. Other supplies required include sponges, gauze, and dressings.

Anesthesia

Breast cancer surgery is typically performed under general anaesthesia. The scrub nurse must assist with the administration and monitoring of the anaesthesia, ensuring that the patient remains

stable throughout the procedure.

Incision

The surgeon will make an incision in the skin over the affected breast, following a pre-determined surgical plan. The scrub nurse must ensure that the incision site is properly exposed and that the surgeon has a clear view of the surgical field.⁴

Dissection

The surgeon will then dissect through the breast tissue, removing any cancerous tissue and preserving as much healthy tissue as possible. The scrub nurse must assist with the dissection by passing instruments and supplies, controlling bleeding, and keeping the surgical site clear of debris and blood.

Haemostasis

Is the process of stopping bleeding. The scrub nurse must assist the surgeon in achieving haemostasis by applying pressure, using electrocautery, or other means, to control bleeding.

Drain Placement

After the dissection is complete, the surgeon will often place drains in the surgical site to prevent fluid build-up and promote healing. The scrub nurse must ensure that the drains are placed correctly, that they are functioning properly, and that they are secured in place.⁵

Closure

After the drains are placed, the surgeon will close the incision. The scrub nurse must assist with the closure by passing instruments and supplies, controlling bleeding, and ensuring that the closure is neat and secure.

Documentation

The scrub nurse is responsible for documenting the surgical procedure accurately, including the number and types of instruments used, and any complications or issues that arise during the surgery.

Post-operative Care

After the surgery is complete, the scrub nurse's responsibilities continue. The nurse must monitor the patient's vital signs and assist with the administration of pain medication and other

care. The nurse must also ensure that the patient is comfortable, and that the surgical site is clean and properly dressed.

CONCLUSION

Breast cancer surgery is a complex and delicate procedure that requires a skilled surgical team, including an operation theatre scrub nurse. The scrub nurse plays a crucial role in ensuring the success of the surgery by managing the surgical field, preparing the instruments and supplies, assisting the surgeon during the procedure, and providing postoperative care. The nurse must be knowledgeable about the specific steps of the procedure, the instruments required, patient positioning, skin preparation, anaesthesia, incision, dissection, haemostasis, drain placement, closure, and postoperative care. By working closely with the surgeon and other members of the surgical team, the scrub nurse can help ensure that breast cancer surgery is safe and successful for patients.

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