

NON-TECHNICAL SKILLS

Scrub nurses



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Adverse events are unintended injuries or complications caused by the management of the patients' care rather than by the disease itself. Research into causes of adverse events has indicated that poor non-technical skills of staff (e.g. communication, situation awareness) are often a contributory factor. Non-technical skills are not explicitly taught or assessed for healthcare professionals. This is why non-technical skills taxonomies and behavioural rating systems for anaesthetists (ANTS), surgeons (NOTSS) and now scrub practitioners/ nurses (SPLINTS) have been developed by our research team. The rating systems provide staff in the operating theatre with a structured means for discussing, training and assessing this important aspect for safe and effective performance.

Scrub Practitioners' List of Intraoperative Non-Technical Skills (SPLINTS)

Methods of task analyses were used to identify the critical non-technical skills for the scrub practitioner. A literature review, observations and an interview study with experienced scrub practitioners and consultant surgeons indicated that situation awareness, communication and teamwork, as well as skills relating to task management were critical. A skills taxonomy and behavioural rating method were developed and produced as a SPLINTS handbook. These tools detail the skill categories and underlying elements, each with examples of poor and good practice to guide the user of the system, and provides a rating form.

Tools

SPLINTS handbook: www.abdn.ac.uk/iprc/splints

Publications

Mitchell, L & Flin, R. (2008). Non-technical skills of the operating theatre scrub nurse: literature review. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 63, 15-24.

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/18598248>

Mitchell, L., Flin, R., Yule, S., Mitchell, J., Coutts, K. & Youngson, G. (2010). Thinking ahead of the surgeon. An interview study to identify scrub nurses' non-technical skills. *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, 48, 818-828.

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Mitchell, L., Flin, R., Yule, S., Mitchell, J., Coutts, K. & Youngson, G. (in press). Evaluation of the Scrub Practitioners' List of Intraoperative Non-Technical Skills (SPLINTS) system. *International Journal of Nursing Studies*

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