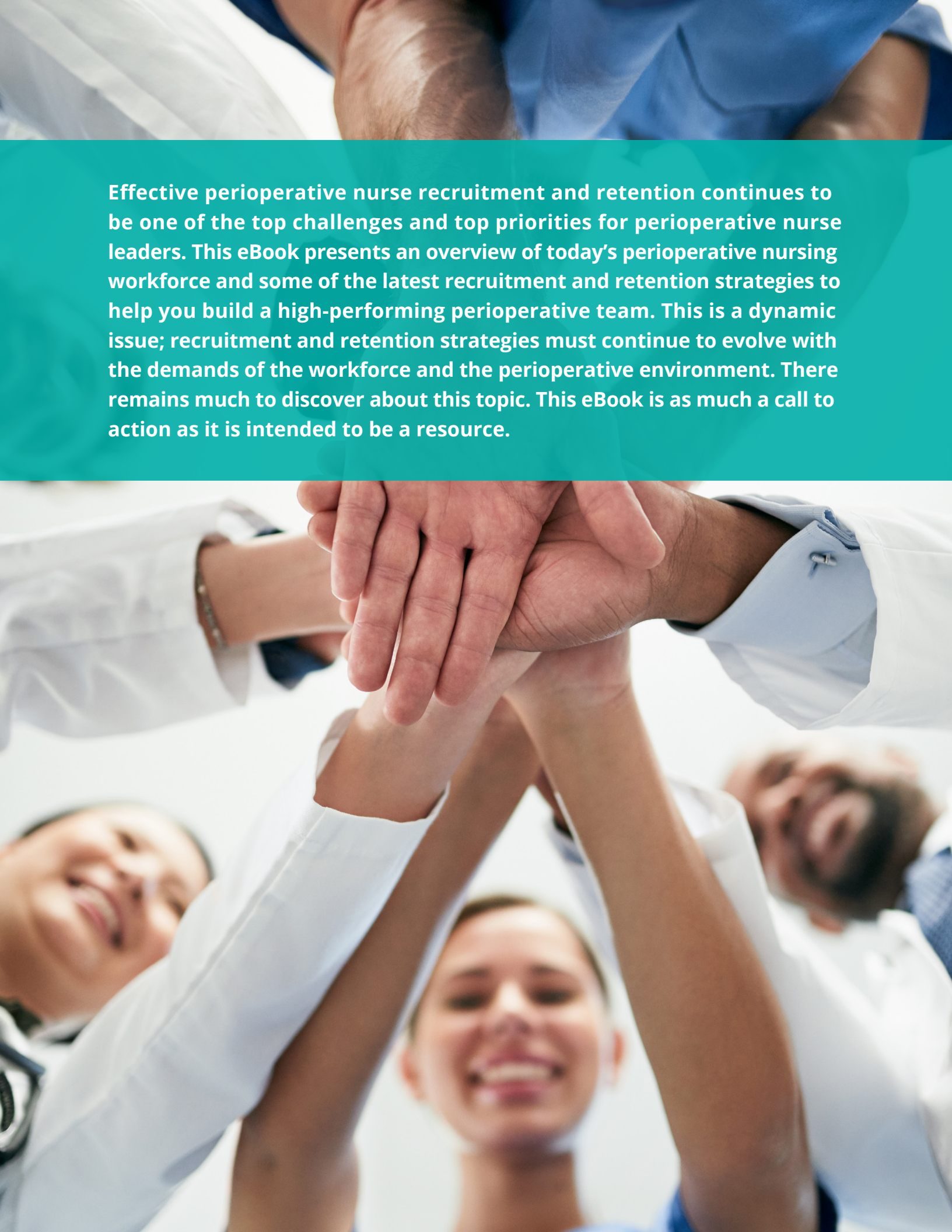# AORN
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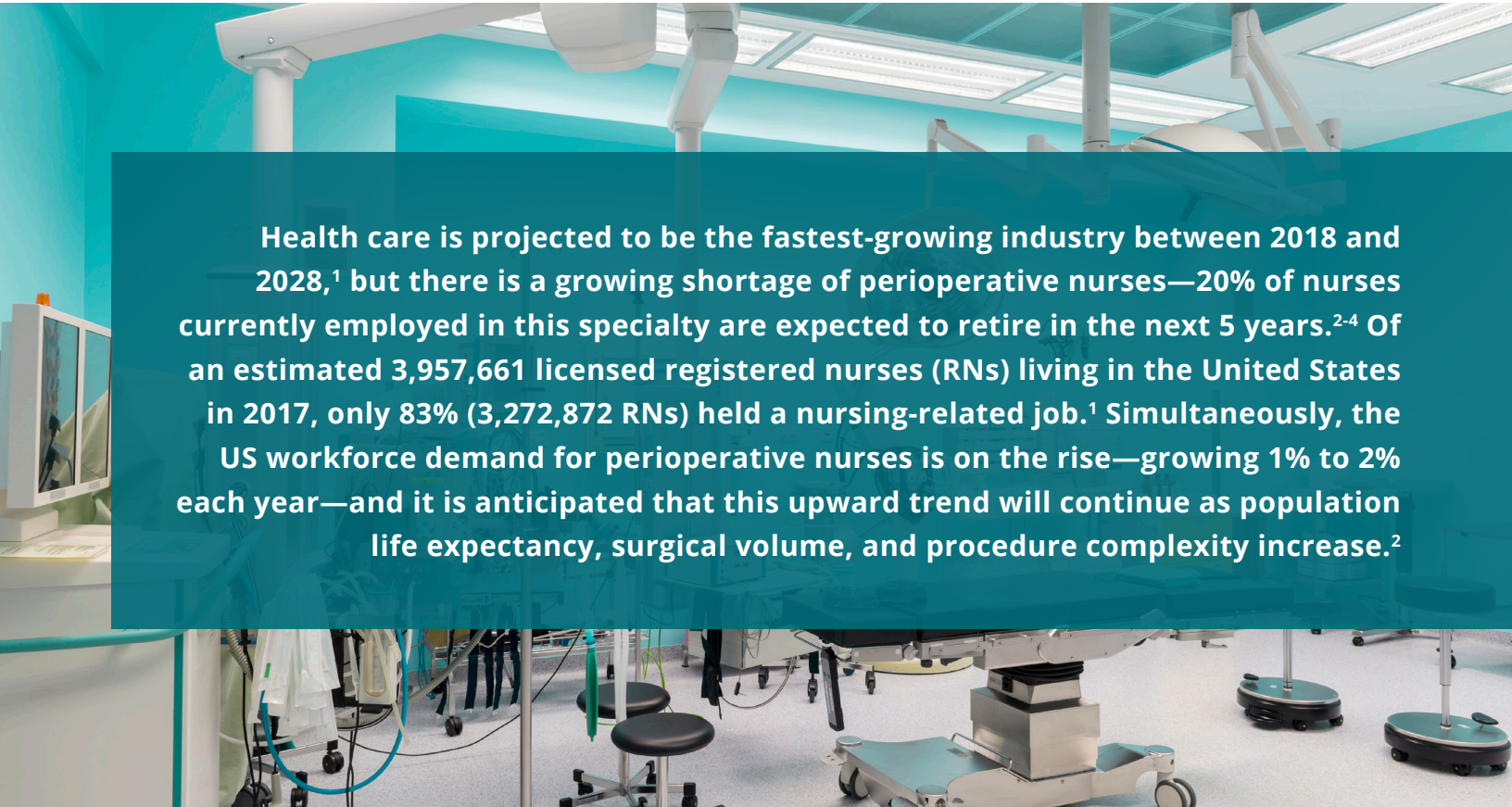
HOW TO

RECRUIT
& RETAIN

PERIOPERATIVE NURSES
Amid a *Nursing Shortage*

Effective perioperative nurse recruitment and retention continues to be one of the top challenges and top priorities for perioperative nurse leaders. This eBook presents an overview of today's perioperative nursing workforce and some of the latest recruitment and retention strategies to help you build a high-performing perioperative team. This is a dynamic issue; recruitment and retention strategies must continue to evolve with the demands of the workforce and the perioperative environment. There remains much to discover about this topic. This eBook is as much a call to action as it is intended to be a resource.

THE TOPICS THAT FOLLOW INCLUDE:

The business impact of the perioperative nurse shortage

Academic partnerships as a strategy for effective recruiting

Creating a welcoming culture in the OR

The gift of successful onboarding

Embracing the multigenerational perioperative workforce

Developing a resilient perioperative team through work-life integration

Cultivating empowered perioperative nurse leaders and staff

Creating a meaningful workplace through mentorship

Tips for attracting and retaining perioperative nurses

Health care is projected to be the fastest-growing industry between 2018 and 2028,[1] but there is a growing shortage of perioperative nurses—20% of nurses currently employed in this specialty are expected to retire in the next 5 years.[2-4] Of an estimated 3,957,661 licensed registered nurses (RNs) living in the United States in 2017, only 83% (3,272,872 RNs) held a nursing-related job.[1] Simultaneously, the US workforce demand for perioperative nurses is on the rise—growing 1% to 2% each year—and it is anticipated that this upward trend will continue as population life expectancy, surgical volume, and procedure complexity increase.[2]

THE BUSINESS IMPACT OF THE PERIOPERATIVE NURSE SHORTAGE

The shortage of perioperative nurses is a result of many trends that are intensifying in the workplace today:

- nursing academic enrollment that does not keep up with demand for new nurses,[3]

- decreased exposure to perioperative nursing in both classroom and clinical settings,[4,5]

- a perioperative workforce that is aging and nearing retirement,[3-8]

- an aging patient population that requires more intense nursing care and complex interventions,[2,4] and

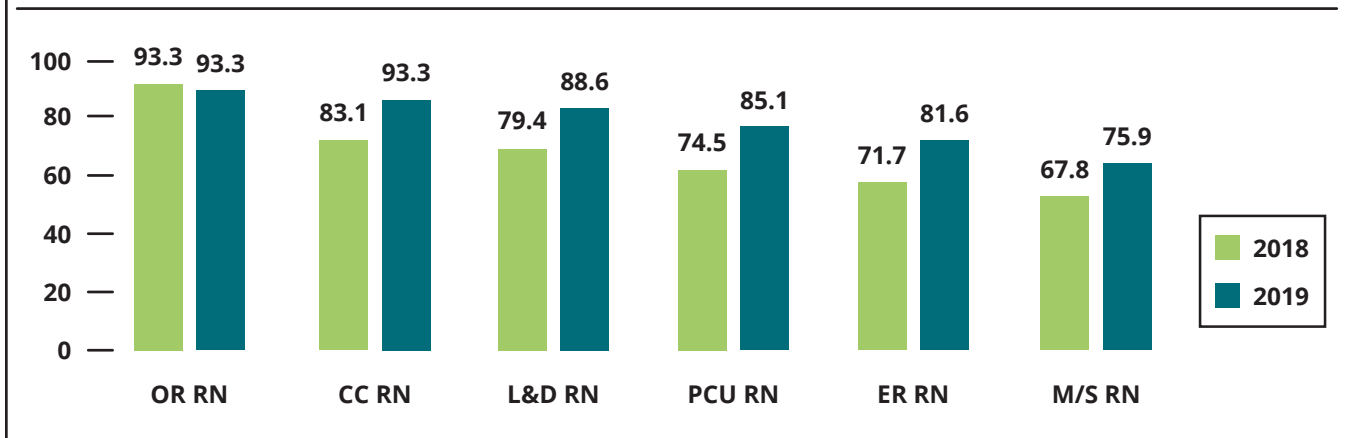- technological advancements that require intense education and skill adaptations.[4]

The American Association of Critical-Care Nurses reported a 3.7% increase in enrollment to entry-level baccalaureate nursing programs in 2018, but this increase is not sufficient to meet the projected demand for nursing services, faculty, researchers, and primary care providers. The perioperative nursing shortage carries economic consequences for health care organizations as well as patient safety and quality concerns. Surgery departments are often referred to as the economic engines of health care facilities because they can generate as much as 60% of a hospital's revenue.[4] As such, hospital leaders who do not prioritize recruitment and retention of perioperative nurses are likely to experience declining revenues in the years to come, especially in organizations that experience high personnel turnover rates.

RN vacancies that lead to mandatory or voluntary overtime in the operating room (OR) have been associated with staff burnout and occurrence of medical errors.[9] The evidence indicates that hospital leaders and executives should invest in optimal nurse staffing to improve patient safety and quality of care.[9]

According to AORN's perioperative education department, it can cost as much as $120,000 to train and prepare a new perioperative nurse.[3] It's a worthy investment to properly prepare your staff and a more lucrative one if you can retain those you hire and train, particularly when it can take an average of 93 days to fill an OR nurse position **(Figure 1)**.[10]

Figure 1. **RN Recruitment Difficulty Index in Days**

	OR RN	CC RN	L&D RN	PCU RN	ER RN	M/S RN
2018	93.3	83.1	79.4	74.5	71.7	67.8
2019	93.3	93.3	88.6	85.1	81.6	75.9

Source: NSI Nursing Solutions, Inc., 2016

ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIPS AS A STRATEGY FOR EFFECTIVE RECRUITING

Academic partnerships that include internships, externships, perioperative electives and practicums, work-study programs, volunteer programs, nurse fellowships, nurse residencies, and other programs can be a powerful and effective tool in a comprehensive recruitment and retention strategy. Not only can you identify fresh talent among students of nursing, you can also direct their learning and experiences to prepare them for a successful career in perioperative nursing at your organization. One such academic partnership success story details the mutual benefits of a collaborative agreement for both the health care organization and the college or university.[11] Some benefits of academic partnerships to the hiring organization include:

- less costly and more efficient recruiting – directly from the academic program;

- an increased number of applicants;

- team integration during academic training and before hire;

- infusing the department with new talent;

- strengthened health care organization partnerships in the community;

- a less task-oriented and more education-focused culture; and

- the ability to

  - assess students for interest in the perioperative environment,

  - evaluate students for organizational fit,

  - evaluate students in the work setting, and

  - complete organizational orientation more efficiently.[11]

Other success stories[12,13] can be found in extern-intern programs, practicums offered at hospitals and ambulatory surgery centers, voluntary summer programs, summer work study programs, senior practicum, and nurse fellowship programs and nurse residency programs for new hires.[12,13]

Another advantage of prioritizing academic partnerships is the opportunity to develop novel approaches to clinical education in your organization. One such approach to collaboration between a nursing school and a health care institution is the dedicated education unit (DEU). DEUs are popular among academic medical centers that teach nursing students. In contrast to the traditional educational model of one nursing instructor for eight to 10 nursing students, DEUs feature professional staff nurses assuming an active role in instructing the students. These staff nurses are prepared to model skills and clinical judgement. These collaborative work environments have attracted nursing students to seek employment on the nursing units where they were trained.[13]

CREATING A WELCOMING CULTURE IN THE OR

Joy in the workplace has recently been emphasized as an essential component of staff engagement and retention.[14] Clinicians who report feeling joy in their work are the same ones who report a high level of quality and safety and high-performing teams in their workplaces. On the contrary, when the workplace is not welcoming, clinicians report lower levels of quality and diminished safety culture and organizational performance. Symptoms of an unwelcoming workplace may include overwhelming production pressure, an increased number of medical errors, staff burnout, staff turnover, and poor morale. Disengagement in work can be another symptom of an unwelcoming workplace; a 2017 Gallup poll reported that more than two-thirds of workers nationwide are disengaged at work. People who are disengaged tend to look for new jobs, and one study indicated that 33% of new RNs look for another job within a year.[15]

In addition, you can use the **IHI Framework for Improving Joy in Work**[14] **to evaluate your workplace on these nine important characteristics of a joyful and engaged workforce:**

- Physical and psychological safety
- Meaning and purpose
- Choice and autonomy
- Recognition and reward
- Participative management
- Camaraderie and teamwork
- Daily improvement
- Wellness and resilience
- Real-time management

Nurse leaders can foster a welcoming culture by using these 13 tips:

- Lead with optimism[17]
- Create a healthy, positive, inviting work culture[17-19]
- Be visible and available[17]
- Foster interpersonal and organizational trust[17]
- Cultivate relationships[17]
- Set clear goals and provide feedback[17]
- Provide meaningful work[17]
- Encourage autonomy and individual growth[17]
- Communicate and be transparent[17]
- Provide authentic praise[20]
- Provide fair compensation[21]
- Provide a physical work environment that facilitates ease in work[21]
- Adopt a zero-tolerance policy for incivility and bullying[22]

Factors that influence nurse retention include both organizational factors, such as work environment, culture, commitment, work demands, and social support, and individual factors, such as job satisfaction and burnout.[16] Organizations can support perioperative RNs by prioritizing improvements in these areas. Perioperative leaders are well-positioned to champion improvements by developing an environment that enhances engagement, job satisfaction, and retention.

THE GIFT OF SUCCESSFUL ONBOARDING

AORN Education Solutions

Periop 101 is a comprehensive, blended educational program developed by AORN's expert perioperative nurse-authors.

Periop 101 is based on AORN's latest, evidence-based Guidelines for Perioperative Practice. There are currently more than 12,000 Periop 101 graduates and counting. This program, which includes didactic learning modules, combines a standardized, evidence-based online curriculum and textbook readings with hands-on skills labs and a clinical practicum led by experienced perioperative nurses.

Who should take Periop 101? Hospitals and ambulatory surgery centers offer this program for:

- Novice perioperative nurses
- Experienced nurses changing specialties
- Nurses returning to work after an extended absence who need a refresher course
- Experienced nurses who never had formal, didactic education to improve their patient assessment, decision-making, and clinical reasoning skills
- Entire OR nursing staffs to promote educational consistency and to aid in prevention of potential risk issues

Learn more at *www.aorn.org/periop101*

Periop 202™ is essential education for specialty surgical procedures.

Perioperative professionals who take each stand-alone Periop 202 course will learn the workflows and evidence-based practices for a specific procedure prior to being assigned to that surgery.

Who will benefit from these courses?

- Experienced nurses who are not yet knowledgeable about, or who want a refresher on, specialty procedures such as total hip arthroplasty, total knee arthroplasty, spine surgery, and orthopedic trauma
- Nurses and surgical team members who want to expand into surgical specialties
- Perioperative educators who want to build their surgical specialty offerings

EMBRACING THE MULTIGENERATIONAL PERIOPERATIVE WORKFORCE

According to one study, between the years 2015 and 2030, approximately 1 million RNs will retire concurrently with increased need for more RNs - about 4 million additional RNs.[7] Today's nursing workforce spans four generations, with traditionalists born before 1944, baby boomers born between 1944 and 1964, Generation Xers born between 1965 and 1979, and millennials born between 1980 and 1995. The iGeneration, born after 1995, is beginning to join the workforce. Each generation has had unique life experiences that mold their values and beliefs.

One of the main challenges of generational differences is the effect on a collaborative environment that is dependent on teamwork and clear communication in order to provide safe and positive patient outcomes. One strategy to respond to this challenge is to provide effective team training that includes using a common platform for communicating, bridging the technology gap, and developing an appreciation of the value each generation brings to the workplace.[23,24]

Today's leaders must accept the changing environment, understand what is important to members of generations other than their own, learn how to engage them, and recognize the need to support leadership development. It is predicted that by 2030 Millennials will dominate the nursing profession.[7] Millennials are increasingly becoming perioperative leaders, and it is essential for them to develop self-awareness, understand the value they bring to the workplace, and value their colleagues from different generations.

There are a variety of solutions you can implement to attract and retain millennial nurses, and many (if not all) will also appeal to staff members from other generations. One approach is to understand and respond to reasons that perioperative nurses leave their positions. When you understand why perioperative nurses intend to leave, you are better positioned to effect change to prevent them from leaving.

The 2019 AORN Salary Survey asked respondents whether they were thinking of quitting their job in the next year. Approximately 28% of survey participants responded that they were either somewhat likely or likely to quit in the next year, with 67% of those considering changing employers, 12% changing careers within health care, 10% planning to retire, 3% planning to change careers outside of health care, 2% leaving for personal reasons including family obligations, and 1% leaving jobs to attend school full time. The reasons these respondents gave for intending to leave their positions included:

- Dissatisfaction with work environment/culture (46%)
- Dissatisfaction with supervisor/manager (42%)
- Dissatisfaction with salary (38%)
- Dissatisfaction with employer (35%)
- New opportunity for career advancement (28%)
- Dissatisfaction with hours (19%)
- Desire to work in a different facility (16%)
- Dissatisfaction with physical demands of job (14%)
- Family reasons (12%)
- Retirement (11%)
- Dissatisfaction with commute (9%)
- To pursue an education degree (7%)
- Tired of this career (6%)[6]

The top four reasons are directly related to dissatisfaction with the work environment, the supervisor, the employer, and the salary.[6] An intentional focus on these areas can go a long way in your retention efforts.

In 2016, the millennials were the largest generation to enter the workforce since the baby boomers, and this number is expected to pass boomer numbers.[7] At the same time, a large wave of baby boomers have arrived at retirement age, and the perioperative specialty is starting to experience a significant loss in clinical knowledge.[5] To address this generational shift—and the growing nursing shortage—employers must attract millennials and create opportunities for a transfer in knowledge.

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79%
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Expected to represent 40% of America's workforce by 2020,[6] millennials are transforming recruiting and retention strategies. The millennial generation has been shaped by profound historical changes in the labor market, workforce, workplace, the nature of employment, and even the very nature of work.[8] The uncertain environment along with advances in technology have led millennials to develop different goals and expectations than workers from previous generations. As a result, employers will need to establish workforce policies, benefits plans, communication practices, and cultural standards that align with the needs of this generation.[7]

So, what makes millennials unique, and what are they looking for in their careers? The Intelligence Group, a division of the Creative Artists Agency, concentrates on analysis of youth-focused consumer preferences and trend forecasting. They found that:

- **64%** of millennials say it's a priority for them to make the world a better place.[6]

- **72%** would like to be their own boss. But if they do have to work for a boss, **79%** of them would want that boss to serve more as a coach or mentor.[6]

- **88%** prefer a collaborative work culture rather than a competitive one.[6]

- **74%** want flexible work schedules.[6]

- **88%** want "work-life integration," which isn't the same as work-life balance, since work and life now blend inextricably.[6]

Millennial nurses are very interested in engagement, culture, and mission, and while addressing their priorities may seem challenging, employers might consider bringing together a team of young staff members to help develop recruiting and retention strategies. You might even ask them to participate in job interviews.[7]

The millennial generation has been shaped by profound historical changes in the labor market, workforce, workplace, the nature of employment, and even the very nature of work.

A survey of nurses in Australia on the effect of perceived workload on nurses' well-being and the intention to leave the occupation suggests that when higher perceived workload is combined with lower levels of organizational support, nurses are more likely to consider leaving the profession.[25] The researchers concluded that managers are in a position to address issues before highly skilled employees leave.[25]

A 2018 survey found that 50.9% of the RN workforce in the United States is age 50 or older.[3] The Health Resources and Services Administration estimates that more than 1 million RNs will reach retirement age in the next 10 to 15 years.[3] To prepare for the accelerating rate of RN retirements, Beurhaus et al recommended that nurse leaders and executives and human resource officers take four actions to anticipate and prevent negative consequences:

1. Gather and evaluate nursing workforce data to identify nursing units, departments, and patient populations that will be affected by RN retirement.

2. Prioritize retirement planning with unit and department leaders.

3. Organize mentorship programs to bridge the knowledge gap between experienced retiring RNs and their replacements.

4. Strengthen succession planning to identify and prepare next-generation nurse leaders by providing education in leadership development, team building, effective communication, program development, budgeting, and other leadership topics.[7]

DEVELOPING A RESILIENT PERIOPERATIVE TEAM THROUGH WORK-LIFE INTEGRATION

Nurses commonly struggle with work-life integration. Symptoms of burnout among US nurses are prevalent, though not more common than for other workers. However, nurses experience greater struggles with work-life integration than other workers do.[26] Work-life imbalance predicts burnout, lower job satisfaction, and lower perceived patient care quality.[26] Better alignment between work schedules and an individual's personal needs improves work-life integration.[26]

Health care employers' staff health and well-being strategies should be informed by nurses' insights into what works for them.[27] This may mean offering opportunities to take part in well-being activities and having an inclusive and empowering approach to staff engagement. Nurses value choice, control, and clear boundaries between home and work.[27]

Perioperative nurse leaders should prioritize fostering work-life integration not only for their staff, but also for themselves.

Reducing the level of demands (particularly psychological demands) between family and career development and maintaining a proper level of job control are essential to work-life integration for nurses.[28] Implications for nursing management are

that flexible work practices to lessen job demand pressure and facilitate job engagement and participation among nurses may promote work-life integration. These practices may include

- maintaining an adequate number of nursing staff and effectively scheduling part-time nurses;
- implementing team-based management and training in highly labor-intensive units like the OR; and
- implementing self-scheduling and job-sharing as solutions for problematic work schedules.[28]

Although nurse leaders are often removed from daily patient care activities, the pervasive challenges in the work environment create conditions for professional burnout.[29] Nurse leaders must garner compassion satisfaction from different sources, including peer and staff interactions.[29] In a study of nurse leader burnout, researchers found higher levels of compassion satisfaction and lower levels of work-life integration. The researchers concluded that nurse leaders at all levels must address the risk of burnout and can do so through individual and organizational resiliency strategies.[29] As a significant driving force for supporting joy in the work environment, nurse leaders must make building personal resilience and supporting their own well-being a priority as a strategy for achieving national goals for workforce development and health care reform.[29]

CULTIVATING EMPOWERED PERIOPERATIVE NURSE LEADERS AND STAFF

Knowing that perioperative nurses who plan to leave their positions frequently report dissatisfaction with their leaders[6] tells us that we should focus efforts on cultivating empowered nurse leaders who exhibit behaviors associated with staff retention among a multigenerational perioperative workforce.[30] Mindful leaders recognize what staff want from their leaders and how they can support their teams.[31] Empowered nurse leaders believe they are capable and have the authority to meet the needs of their teams.[32,33] The empowerment of nurse managers correlates positively with job satisfaction, perceived organizational support, role satisfaction, and managerial self-efficacy, and correlates negatively with emotional exhaustion and personal illness.[34]

Creating positive communication behaviors was identified as a strong characteristic in empowering nurse leaders in a 2018 study involving military nurses.[35] The researchers developed eight constructs: comprehensibility, listening, openness, feedback, empathy, nonverbal, paralanguage, and manner. These constructs can be used to frame innovative leadership assessment and targeted training that focuses on these specific constructs in nurse leader communication to enhance the nursing workplace environment.

A study conducted to evaluate the connection between empowerment and organizational culture and climate suggested that nurse managers were both structurally and psychologically empowered when the organizational culture was proficient and resistant and the climate was engaged and functional.[34] These results suggest that nurse managers are more likely to be empowered when there is an appropriate organizational culture and climate in the workplace. Creating an empowering work environment can have a positive impact on staff satisfaction and retention strategies.

In another study,[36] researchers reviewed the relationship between leadership, structural empowerment, and engagement in nurses. They found that the structural empowerment of nurses and nurse managers works together with transformational leadership qualities to improve nurse engagement.[36] The transformational leadership of nurse managers at the unit level has a double impact on staff nurses: first, increasing empowerment and second, increasing engagement.[36]

Studies[32,37] from New Zealand and Australia suggest that the structural position of nurse leaders is vital to ensure that they are empowered and able to adapt to a changing environment.[32,37] A perceived interprofessional collaboration (IPC) among health care professionals has been one means of transforming the health care system by addressing concerns about shortages of empowered leaders.[37] Organizational support and resources are key to promoting IPC. Structural empowerment, authentic leadership, and a professional nursing practice environment can enhance IPC.[37]

Empowered nurse leaders can be a strong indicator for staff retention, and empowerment is important for retaining those nurse leaders too.

Empowering leaders plays a significant role in creating a retention strategy for the nurse middle manager.[38] Transformational leadership practices of the senior nurses empower the middle and first-line nurse managers, leading to increased perceptions of organizational support and quality care and decreased intent to leave.[38] In other words, transformational leadership among senior nurse leaders and executives may reduce the attrition rate of middle managers.[38] Researchers in England found that access to formal and informal power, opportunity, resources, information, and support are determinants of structural empowerment.[39] Empowerment of nurse leaders in middle management positions is vital given their roles in enabling nursing teams to deliver high-quality care, benefiting both patient and workforce outcomes.[39] Administrative support for nurse middle managers is needed to sustain meaningful team engagement.[39]

According to the authors of the book *Unleash Your Employees, Energize Your Customer, Transform Your Business*,[40] leaders are savvier than ever before because social networking is allowing them to have insights into the needs of personnel reporting to them. Strategies to embrace this phenomenon include empowering leaders to be the solution and encouraging and supporting their ideas and projects. This not only brings about supported change, it challenges leaders' abilities and allows them to become more confident.

In the book, *The Leaders Dilemma: How Do You Build an Empowered and Adaptive Organization Without Losing Control*,[41] the authors give 12 guiding principles, that if implemented, are part of an adaptable system that leaders can use to harness the knowledge and creativity of their people:

1. **Values** Bind people to a common cause, not a central plan
2. **Governance** Govern through shared values and sound judgment, not detailed rules and regulations
3. **Transparency** Make information open and transparent, don't restrict and control it
4. **Teams** Organize around a network of accountable teams, not centralized functions
5. **Trust** Trust teams to regulate and improve their performance; don't micromanage them
6. **Accountability** Base accountability on holistic criteria and peer reviews, not on hierarchical relationships
7. **Goals** Set ambitious medium-term goals, not short-term negotiated targets
8. **Rewards** Base rewards on relative performance, not fixed targets
9. **Planning** Make planning a continuous and inclusive process, not a top-down annual event
10. **Coordination** Coordinate interactions dynamically, not through annual budgets
11. **Resources** Make resources available just-in-time, not just-in-case
12. **Controls** Base controls on fast, frequent feedback, not on budget variances

CREATING A MEANINGFUL WORKPLACE WITH MENTORSHIP

Mentoring programs offer a way to support perioperative nurses as they adapt to the unique and demanding practice environment and a way to improve nurse retention. The benefits of mentorship aren't exclusive to the mentee. Happy, more-productive workers are valuable to any organization for the simple fact that they tend to stay longer.

Mentoring is defined as a distinct reciprocal and collaborative learning relationship between two or more individuals with mutual goals in a professional setting.[42] They share accountability for the outcomes and success of the relationship, which is focused on personal and professional growth. In the context of perioperative nursing, mentors are expert nurses who volunteer to coach, support, and educate novice nurses and those who are learning a new role such as leadership.[43] Mentoring is nothing new.[42] Since the time of Florence Nightingale, nurses have been taking novices under their wings and helping them learn to fly – this is what we do!

Mentors contribute to a meaningful workplace by providing guidance to their mentees about how to gain valuable leadership skills.[44] The benefits of mentorship extend to employees well beyond the early stages of their careers. Employees with a mentor are more likely to say they are well paid and to believe that their contributions are valued by their colleagues.[44] According to a survey, more than four in 10 workers who didn't have a mentor said they had considered quitting their job in the past 3 months.[44] 71% of employees with a mentor said their company provided them with excellent or good opportunities to advance their career, while just 47% of those without a mentor said the same.[44]

Successful mentoring relationships are built on mutual trust. Mentors and mentees must be willing to share information about themselves, including unpleasant experiences they have had.[45] It requires finding the right balance between teaching and providing constructive feedback while also giving encouragement and tailoring the experience to the individual nurse.[45] In the context of perioperative nursing, mentors are expert nurses who volunteer to coach, support, and educate novice nurses and those who are learning a new role such as leadership.[43] Mentors need to let mentees know regularly that they believe the mentee will succeed.[43]

Mentoring strengthens perioperative nursing because it increases nurse job satisfaction, creates happy, more-productive workers who stay with an organization longer, reduces turnover and the costs for onboarding, prepares for leadership succession, and is a tool to motivate nurses to become nursing leaders, administrators, educators, and mentors themselves.[46] Nurses who are being mentored gain knowledge, confidence, organizational support, and leadership skills.[46] In today's OR, an RN circulator has to be part engineer, part electronics expert, part computer technician, and part mind reader, all while maintaining core nursing skills to care for the patient.[47] It is up to all of us to make sure that novice nurses not only survive but thrive in this very complex perioperative world.[47]

Mentoring helps cultivate nurse leaders, retain nurses, and diversify the nursing workforce. The need for perioperative nurse leaders is urgent as there is a shortage of perioperative nursing executives, administrators, and directors. If we want nurses to advance to positions of leadership in health care and society at large, we need to prioritize meaningful mentorship.

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TIPS FOR ATTRACTING & RETAINING PERIOPERATIVE NURSES

What can perioperative leaders do to effectively recruit and retain perioperative nurses? This eBook has provided a discussion of some hot topics surrounding effective recruitment and retention. Leaders should evaluate organizational culture and environment that serves as the foundation for a healthy workforce, as described in this eBook. In addition, the following 11 tips can help you with getting started on recruitment and retention activities in your organization.

1. Use technology. Optimizing your website for mobile devices will make it easier for applicants to interact with your organization. To appeal to the tech-savvy millennials, mobile optimization and video technology should be a part of every facility's recruiting, interviewing, and onboarding strategy. Using video technology offers a lot of flexibility; the right strategy can shorten your hiring cycle and reduce costs. Ask job candidates to send, along with their resume, a short video of themselves answering specific screening questions. This can save you time in identifying a good cultural match, and it also prevents qualified candidates from being eliminated on the basis of their resume alone. Not only can these technologies help simplify your hiring process, but they can create a more personal experience for candidates as well.[7]

2. Communicate your purpose and provide ways to give back. Mission-focused millennials want to make the world a better place, and they are committed to finding a company that helps them achieve this goal. This characteristic aligns with many nurses who chose their profession to make a difference in patients' lives. Use your organization's mission in your communications to appeal to these younger professionals.[9]

3. Leverage the old-school tactic of networking. The advanced technology we have today has many benefits, but even millennials will agree that it does little to help engage job candidates on a personal level. Try going back to the old-school tactic of networking – word of mouth and face-to-face contact. One survey found that 45% of health care workers still use personal networking as their #1 resource for finding a new job.[7]

4. Tap into employee connections, or even former alumni and health care workers, to meet new potential candidates. This could be done by hosting a hiring event or coffee meet-up, for example. Meeting through a shared connection builds a path to trust, which is good for both the employer and employee.[7]

5. Invest in up-to-date technology and equipment for streamlined, efficient processes. Because millennials have grown up in the digital age, they are accustomed to using the latest computers and devices at home and in the workplace. Millennials will push for this, as they are more easily frustrated with out-of-date or slow equipment, and it's truly a win-win for your facility.[9]

6. Try to create positive work-life integration. Younger nurses want more flexibility with their schedules in order to leave work early to pick up children or attend an important event like a wedding or funeral. They expect to have a generous amount of paid time off and the ability to adjust their hours when necessary.[9]

7. Provide open communication from executives and leaders. One of the quickest ways to lose employees is to keep them in the dark about important news or to make big decisions without any input from them. Millennials are used to having information at their fingertips. Learning about important company news at the same time as the general public will only lower their trust in leadership and make them feel undervalued.[9]

8. Spend more time mentoring new employees and focus on development. Millennials are driven by their goals and actions; they want ownership of projects and many aspire to be leaders themselves. Millennial expert and author Bruce Tulgan recommends mentoring these younger employees, providing them with regular feedback and guidance.[9] Ask your nurse supervisors to allocate some of their time to coach new nurses and address their concerns and questions.[9]

9. Design creative onboarding, training, and education initiatives. Filling positions vacated by baby boomers will become increasingly difficult because nursing students today have little or no exposure to the perioperative area and are less likely to select the OR. According to AORN's perioperative education department, new nurses require a standardized and evidence-based, basic perioperative education, an opportunity to practice new skills, and an individualized clinical preceptorship that is measured by successful competency assessment.

   "Many facilities try to meet their perioperative needs by only hiring experienced OR nurses. However, this supply is quickly drying up. Hospitals will need to be more creative and open to training inexperienced nurses and new grads."[3] One way to do this would be to develop a collaborative partnership between your facility or hospital system and a local nursing school to create a perioperative nursing program. This would offer greater exposure to the perioperative specialty among nursing students and potentially increase the workforce to help meet the growing demand.[2]

10. Offer perioperative nurse residencies. Opening perioperative areas for nurse residencies would meet the **IOM13** recommendations for smoother transition to practice, ease nurses into the OR specialty, and potentially increase retention of new nurses. Offer a residency program to new graduates using AORN Periop 101 to ensure evidence-based teaching and learning practices are employed. New nurse success in residency programs has been well documented.[4]

11. Offer programs that support your employees' financial well-being. Financial health is connected to physical health and well-being. As such, human resources department leaders should consider offering programs that could range from classes on budgeting, home buying, and college planning to onsite banking services and retirement packages aimed at multiple generations. Starting early with millennials will help them reach financial well-being at a younger age.[7]

"Hospitals will need to be more creative and open to training inexperienced nurses and new grads." - Susan Root

CONCLUSION

As you reflect on the information in this eBook, you may perceive that some these ideas and strategies are not new and may have been tried over the years in your institution. However, the literature suggests that leaders need to take a multifaceted approach based on the specific situation. By addressing both immediate and long-term needs, these recruitment and retention strategies can significantly increase the number of nurses who move into the perioperative specialty and keep those who are already on the OR path moving forward. Focusing on innovation and, at times, re-creation of programs customized to your environment will be necessary.

Research shows that both new and experienced professionals look for training and development opportunities in order to thrive in their careers. This education can encompass methods to care for their own health and well-being, new clinical practices, and technology upgrades. This can take place among peers in the organization or by attendance at local or national meetings, like those held by AORN.

Dedicated clinicians want to contribute to making the world a better place. The ability to leverage the most current technology and best practices to provide the highest level of care is their goal. Knowledge of these important trends in attracting perioperative talent can only be a win for your organization—preparing your staff to go above and beyond will be positive for patient safety and your bottom line.

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