

Testimony of Connie A. Sargent, RN-BC, BS, CNOR
House Health Policy Committee
In support of SB 605
March 23, 2010

Good morning Mr. Chair and members of the **House** Health Policy Committee.

My name is Connie Sargent, and I am a Registered Nurse who works in the perioperative area and have over 25 years of experience as an RN circulator. I'm here today representing the **Association of periOperative Registered Nurses (AORN)** and myself as a surgical nurse. I hope my testimony can explain what an RN Circulator is, and why an RN Circulator is vital for patient safety.

I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the nursing community in support of **Senate Bill 605**, Senator Roger Kahn's RN Circulator Bill. This bill will guarantee every Michigan surgical patient the best possible care by requiring, **an RN Circulator during every surgical procedure**. I have chosen to come from behind the **double doors** of an OR suite to stand up for each patient in the state of Michigan, knowing that those having surgery, needed to be treated equally. I embraced, along with my fellow nurses in Michigan to educate members of the House and Senate and neighbors and friends what our job entails and why an RN is needed as a circulator.

I started this project back in 2006 when I realized that Michigan had no law or regulation requiring each patient to have an RN as a circulator. I spoke to Senator George and he advised me of the steps to follow to make this a law. Politics was something I thought I would do in my home community, never dreaming I would be her today. And what a learning experience this has been!

RN Circulator as coordinator and advocate

An RN Circulator is the registered nurse **who coordinates the nursing care and safety needs of a patient while the patient undergoes a surgical procedure** by constantly evaluating and coordinating care for patient safety. Perhaps you or a loved one has needed surgery. Imagine yourself on the OR bed for a moment. Makes a person feel pretty vulnerable, flat on your back surrounded by a surgeon, an anesthesia provider, a scrub person (whose role is to pass the surgical instruments), a first assistant (who helps with the procedure), and a Circulating Nurse in the room.

Everyone else in the room has a fine focus but the RN circulator has a broad focus of all events taking place in the room. As part of this duty, the Circulator is responsible for knowing the patient's medical history, checking the permit, staying with the patient before, during, and after surgery, and speaking for the patient in the operating room. **The RN Circulator is the patient's advocate** when the patient is often unable to speak for themselves. The RN Circulator listens to the patient and family regarding any concerns or problems that may occur that could impact patient health. As you can see, this is an important role, yet currently there is **no law or regulation in Michigan** that requires the circulator to be an RN in the operating room during surgical procedures.

Perioperative nursing requires a unique and **highly developed set of knowledge and skills** as well as specialized training and education. Using these skills make the RN uniquely qualified to fulfill the circulating role

The Skill Mix needed consists of;

Education

Communication

Expert Evaluation

and Patient Advocacy

(1) Education The RN Circulator has specialized distinct education and classes combining all of their knowledge as an RN and using AORN guidelines to understand how to care for his or her patient. The RN Circulator's specialized knowledge of anatomy, physiology, and pharmacology are vital to the success of any surgery, especially when a patient has a wide variety of problems.

(2) Communication The RN Circulator **facilitates communication** between the patient, the patient's family, and the surgical team. This is vital, because many times **effective communication between team members can save lives and prevent injury.**

(3) Expert Evaluation- *The RN Circulator's specialized knowledge, observation, assessment, and decision making skills are critical in an operating room.*

Patient evaluation includes histories of cardiac issues, other medical issues such as renal disease or diabetes, drug allergies and prior surgeries or implants. The RN is responsible for making sure the right medications and blood products are given to the correct patient. The RN uses her knowledge and education to evaluate proper positioning, verifies appropriate medications used on the surgical field, and understands the use of complex equipment (lasers, cautery, robotics, and operative microscopes), as well as anticipates the need for extra instruments and supplies. By doing so, we can avoid **serious problems with the patient and make sure surgery proceeds safely. Injuries** including vascular and neuro injuries **can easily and quickly occur during a procedure.**

(4) Patient Advocacy-

A vital duty of the RN Circulator is to be the patient's advocate and are the patient's voice during a procedure **when the patient is most vulnerable.**

The RN also helps to coordinate the time out for patient safety, ensuring the right surgeon, patient, procedure, side and other parameters for correct site surgery.

Conclusion

All patients deserve an RN Circulator during their surgery, to serve as patients' eyes, ears and champion when the patients can't speak for themselves. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.