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Position statement on orthopaedic MedTech company representatives (OMCRs) in operating rooms during COVID-19 pandemic

Australian Orthopaedic Association

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In normal circumstances OMCRs attend surgical procedures to provide intra-operative support to operating room (OR) nursing staff in circumstances where it is requested by the nursing staff or surgeon. This is important when their specific product knowledge, expertise and continuity can enhance the instrument handling efficiency of the case and contributes to patient safety and better outcomes. OMCRs provide a valuable resource to the hospital, surgeon, nurses and patients particularly in relation to the peri-operative set-up of complex and new instrumentation.

However, during the current COVID-19 pandemic it is recommended that OCMRs are not present in the operating room if at all possible. If OMCR assistance is required it should be by way of remote access. This could be via video link, telehealth or another visual media channel. It remains the individual orthopaedic surgeon's decision if the presence of an OMCR is required in the operating room. It is the surgeon's responsibility to liaise with the senior operating room manager to ensure all COVID-19 protocols are in place during the entire perioperative period.

The following requirements remain as essential requirements:

All OMCRs are required to attend a course that provides guidance in operating theatre protocols. This course is conducted in accordance with policies and procedure requirements of the Australian College of Peri-operative Nurses (ACORN).

During training, students of operating theatre protocols are taught:

- To observe proper hand hygiene and wear correct attire in the peri-operative setting;
- To remain out of the OR aseptic field;
- Not to speak unless necessary to perform their role;
- Not to provide unsolicited advice to OR staff, including the surgeon;
- Not to be involved in direct patient care, unless it is a special circumstance in regard to the medical technology, which has been identified in advance and authorised by the healthcare facility.

Successful completion of the course entitles the OMCR to hold an ID card identifying them as proficient in the application of operating theatre protocols. Responsible hospital managers ensure that all OMCRs are familiar with ACORN operating theatre protocols, have attended the requisite training and are carrying relevant identification.

During the course of their duties in the operating room, OMCRs facilitate the instrumentation setup to ensure that the contents of loan sets are present and readily identifiable. They enable operating room staff to provide the required level of support to the orthopaedic surgeon. OMCRs will also assist identification of implants from the hospital's consignment stock, by type and size, so that operating room staff can provide the specific devices required for implantation by the surgeon.