



CASE STUDY

Title:

National Occupational Standards as a tool in the creation of Competency Assessments for Intraoperative Cell Salvage

Background:

A UK Cell Salvage Action Group (UKCSAG) was established in 2006 to help support the wider implementation of Intraoperative Cell Salvage (ICS) as an alternative to donor blood and to facilitate a UK approach to its use. The group consists of UK leaders in ICS, makes recommendations considered to be best practice and publishes resources to support the implementation and development of ICS services in hospitals. The outputs of the group are available to users through the website www.transfusionguidelines.org.uk

Using National occupational standards:

Who uses them?

Through the UKCSAG members and the 4 UK Blood Services, the NOS based competency assessments are promoted to all UK hospitals and all relevant outputs from the group clearly state that training of operators should include competency assessment of both the theoretical and practical aspects of ICS as are outlined by the NOS. A follow up survey of ICS in the UK in 2014 found that 82% of respondents competency assessed their operators (compared to 46% in 2007). Of the 82% of respondents carrying out competency assessment of operators, 60% said they used the UKCSAG NOS based competency workbook. PCS19, PCS20, PCS21 & PCS22 are identified as the key NOS in this development

For what purpose?

A survey conducted in 2007 by UKCSAG identified that in the UK training for ICS is an obstacle in the development of ICS services with only 46% of hospital respondents undertaking competency assessments of their staff.

Following the publication of the reviewed National Occupational Standards (NOS) for ICS in May 2010, the UKCSAG utilised these standards of practice for the development of a competency based workbook which would be freely available to all UK hospitals with the aim of encouraging competency assessment of operators.

Testimony from users:

Prior to publication, the ICS competency assessments gained endorsements from the Association for Perioperative Practice, the Association of Anaesthetists of Great Britain and Ireland, the British Blood Transfusion Society and the College of Operating Department Practitioners.

“Myself and my staff found the booklet very useful and easy to use and to keep their records up to date” Rob (ODP – Cwm Taf University Health Board).

“I think it is hugely beneficial for both the individual and the hospital to use the cell salvage competency assessment workbook.....staff are then able to keep a case log to show they are maintaining their competency” Tudor (ODP – Aneurin Bevan University Health Board).

“I have been using the cell salvage competency assessment work books from day one and find them to be an invaluable tool for determining the capabilities of operators. It also provides tangible evidence of the training process, which I think should be compulsory evidence of competency. The main issue I have is maintaining competency and I feel an annual review of ability should be undertaken, unless the operator expresses concerns prior to this”. Frank (Senior ODP – Cardiff and Vale University Health Board).

Competency assessment tool – easy to read, use and understand, well laid out and clear, nicely presented (Theatre staff - West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust).

Benefits

The use of the NOS based competency assessments provides the following benefits:

- Individual – evidence of competence to practice in this skill (a requirement for professional registration) as well as evidence of CPD.
- Employer/Organisation – evidence of training, evidence of individuals’ competence to practice, a framework on which to base decision for the need for retraining.

From the UK survey results it can be seen that 60% of those organisations carrying out competency assessments are using a tool which assesses the individual’s ability to carry out a task in line with the NOS.

The future

As outlined in the recent UK survey, 18% of ICS users still do not competency assess their operators and 40% of those that do competency assess do not use the workbook derived from the NOS. In order to ensure minimum standards of practice across the UK are met, further work is required to encourage organisations to utilise these NOS based competency assessments.

Conclusion

The National Occupational Standards for ICS enabled the development of a robust competency document to support and guide users and provide evidence of competence for employers. Demonstration of competence at the time of assessment however is not a guarantee of continued competence in the future. Individual practitioners have a professional responsibility to ensure they remain up to date and carry out procedures in accordance with their training and in line with the nationally recognised standards.

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