



OCTOBER 2018

POST ANAESTHETIC CARE UNIT (PACU) STAGE 1 STAFFING

PACU is a highly specialised environment with the specific purpose to directly monitor and stabilise patients recovering from surgery and anaesthesia. Patients arrive in the PACU in what would be considered by other areas of nursing to be in a 'deteriorated state'. Nurses in the PACU are required to have highly specialised skills to enable them to safely care for patients who are often vulnerable and or unstable until they are deemed to meet the discharge criteria and are 'ward ready'^{1,2}. Respiratory and cardiovascular emergencies are not uncommon during the stage^{1,2} thus nurses must possess an advanced skills, knowledge and understanding of physiology and patient care with a specific focus on surgery and anaesthesia. PACU is considered to be a critical care nursing area and post graduate qualifications are available in Perianaesthesia Nursing throughout Australia³. The Australian College of Perianaesthesia Nursing (ACPAN) suggests nurses undertake ACPAN Level 1 PACU credentialing at a minimum and work towards post graduate perianaesthesia qualifications in the interest of patient safety.

Nurses in this area must also be able to administer medication protocols for management of patient care (such as narcotic, antiemetic and naloxone) and it is also recommended that they are Advanced Life Support trained and accredited. The Australian New Zealand College of Anaesthetists (ANZCA) PS04⁴ document outlines recommendations and may be referred to in conjunction with this statement.

For these reasons ACPAN only recommend Division 1 Registered Nurses in stage 1 PACU.

References:

1. Foran P. Post-anaesthesia nursing. In: Hamlin L, Davies M, Richardson-Tench M, Sutherland-Fraser S, editors. Perioperative Nursing - an introductory text. Sydney, Australia: Elsevier 2016.
2. Foran P, Marshall A. Post-Anaesthesia Recovery. In: Aitken L, Marshall A, Chaboyer W, editors. ACCCN's Critical Care Nursing 3rd ed. Australia: Elsevier 2015. p. 857-84.
3. Cartwright, S, Andrews S. Perianaesthesia Nursing as a Specialty. In: Odom-Forren J. Drain's Perianaesthesia Nursing- a critical care approach. Missouri USA: Elsevier 2013mm
4. Australian New Zealand College of Anaesthetists (ANZCA): Professional Document: PS04: Recommendations for the Post-Anaesthesia Recovery Room (2006). *Review in progress 2018 updates TBA.*

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