



Operating Department Practice (ODP)

Operating Department Practice is a complex activity carried out in all areas of the Operating Department. This incorporates the assessment, planning and delivery of individualised care from admission to the department to immediate post-operative recovery. Operating Department Practitioners (ODPs) are a vital member of the multidisciplinary operating theatre team.

The role of the Operating Department Practitioner is an established one, which has evolved beyond the confines of the hospital operating department and together with a blurring of historical professional boundaries, now contributes to patient care in an increasingly wide variety of healthcare settings. However, the role of the Operating Department Practitioner can be identified as: “concerned with the maintenance and restoration of physical and psychological status of the surgical patient at all levels of dependency”. Operating Department Practitioners provide support and take responsibility for individual patient care throughout the Perioperative stage of surgical intervention. The increasing demands placed on Operating Department Practitioners mean therefore that the practitioner is required to take responsibility for managing all aspects of patient care within the operating department.

The nature of Operating Department Practice has developed in order to respond not only to the dynamic nature of technical and practice innovation within the operating department, but also to enable a greater understanding of the wider direction of the health and social care agenda and how the Operating Department Practitioner needs to respond in light of changes within healthcare as a whole.

As the National Health Service (NHS) has evolved to demand more “fluid” boundaries between practitioners, some artificial role distinctions have begun to be removed. This increasingly involves a change in roles and responsibilities as professionals work more collaboratively together. It is anticipated that these developments have led to an increase in Interprofessional working and the development of seamless services which deliver care more effectively. An example of this can be found in the recent review of critical care provision across England and Wales, which identified critical care as requiring the deployment of a sufficient focus on the experience of the patient throughout the Perioperative journey and the role of practitioners delivering care primarily within three core areas identified as: the anaesthetic phase, the surgical phase and the post anaesthetic (recovery) phase, within an Interprofessional approach to Perioperative care.

This has led to the acknowledgement that Operating Department Practitioners possess the relevant competence and skills and are well placed to contribute to this approach to critical care. Implications for the role and responsibilities of the Operating Department Practitioner have also been identified in the human resource strategy outlined in the Darzi report (2008), which highlighted the need for a flexible and responsive approach to allied health professional careers (including Operating Department Practitioners) that reflects the diversity of the professions and the locations and sectors in which they work.

As Operating Department Practice has progressed along an academic framework to the point where a Diploma of Higher Education has become the minimum qualification required for professional registration. To this end, the development of a BSc (Hons) ODP pathway has become necessary. Over the last decade Canterbury Christ Church University has been instrumental in developing educational programmes in Operating Department Practice. The University is the first in UK to offer a degree which leads to eligibility to apply for registration with the Health Professions Council (HPC).

The BSc (Hons) in Operating Department Practice is a three year programme which requires the student to undertake clinical placements alongside the theoretical components of study. This programme is delivered as a Pathway within the Pre-registration Interprofessional Learning Programme and students

receive an Interprofessional learning approach throughout the three years of the degree. The taught component of the pathway is delivered at the Medway Campus, where there are state of the art teaching facilities for health care professionals. These include a fully equipped simulated operating theatre and scrub room which enable students to integrate theory and clinical practice learning.



Practical learning is an essential component of the programme. Practice allocation is interspersed with theory input at the University in alternating blocks of study throughout the programme. Supervision of practice is managed by experienced qualified practitioners, who have undertaken appropriate preparation in teaching and assessing and supported by a “Link tutor” from the University.

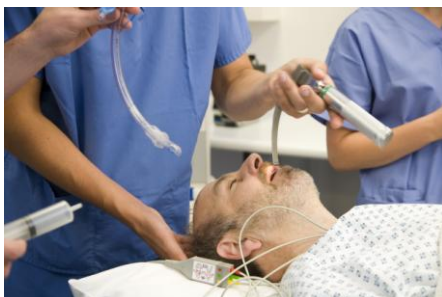
The student Operating Department Practitioner undertakes a broad range of skills as part of the programme,

which is not only based on practical ability but requires a wide variety of knowledge to underpin the acquired skills. As well as having the capability to work under pressure, the ODP is trained to be supportive to the most important person in theatres – the patient! The aim is to produce a competent practitioner who is able to function unsupervised as a member of the theatre team in caring for the patient through the anaesthetic, surgical and post-operative phases of patient care. Incorporated in the programme from a practical sense, there may also be various allocations outside the theatre department to allow students to gain insights into the overall care of patients. Examples include:

- Accident and Emergency Department
- Intensive Care Unit
- Surgical Wards
- Theatre Sterilisation and Supplies Unit

Although the ODP is trained to work primarily within the Operating Department, ODPs can advance on a promotional ladder to senior posts following self-development and experience over a period of time.

This enables the ODP to develop in a variety of care contexts; undertaking advanced clinical skill and critical care, immediate post operative care of patients. This may include assisting and acting as a scrubbed practitioner and developing professional leadership and management skills. Although additional education and training is required these roles may include:



- Non Medically Qualified Anesthetist (Physician’s Assistant Anesthesia)
- Resuscitation Training Officer
- Surgical Care Practitioners
- Transplant Teams
- Management
- Education
- ITU
- A+E