



The Association of Perioperative Practice

Frequently Asked Questions

The Surgical Care Practitioner

What is a surgical care practitioner (SCP)? An SCP is a registered healthcare professional (nurse, ODP or other allied health professional) who has extended the scope of their practice to work as a member of a surgical team. They perform surgical intervention and preoperative & postoperative care under the supervision and direction of a consultant, although not independently (Royal College of Surgeons of England 2013).

My line manager and consultant surgeon have identified a need for the SCP role. What do we do now? As with any innovative role in healthcare, a requirement for the role must be acknowledged by senior surgeons, managers and stakeholders. Funding must be available for a two-year trainee SCP post and a substantive post upon qualifying. Banding varies however, from fact finding initiatives and discussions with a wide cross section of practitioners it is apparent that typically an SCP is working at the minimum level of Band 7 on the Agenda for Change and National Skills Framework. A clinical governance framework that includes risk assessment and the implementation or review of local policies and procedures will also need to be in place to support the practitioner undertaking the SCP role. A job description detailing the role and responsibilities of the trainee SCP and once qualified, the SCP role, is essential. Registered practitioners must not undertake the SCP role until this clinical governance framework is in place.

Are there any pre-requisites? Entry onto any SCP programme will be determined by the higher

education institute. Minimal requirements are registration as a nurse, ODP or AHP with evidence of 18 months post-qualifying experience in a clinical perioperative background. Evidence that the candidate is in, or in a position to be appointed to, a substantive/recognised trainee SCP post prior to commencing the SCP programme will be required.

What training is required? The trainee SCP must attain core & specialist knowledge and skills as detailed within the Royal College of Surgeons of England SCP Curriculum Framework (RCS 2014). There are a number of educational routes through which this can be achieved including completion of a minimum graduate programme of study offered by a number of academic institutes. In addition, stand-alone study days, such as a surgical skill workshop, can also help the SCP attain appropriate skills. A commitment to continuing professional development along with an understanding of the professional, legal and ethical implications of extending practice is also required.

Are there any personal attributes that will be expected of an SCP? It is expected that the trainee will demonstrate a commitment to patient care and patient safety and have an aptitude for clinical and surgical practice. They must have a dedication to continuing professional development along with an understanding of the professional, legal and ethical implications of advanced practice. In addition, a professional and calm attitude, the ability to work well under pressure, acceptance of instruction and constructive criticism and the ability to demonstrate appropriate assertiveness are useful personal attributes.

What support can I expect? The trainee SCP will require both a mentor and clinical supervisor for the duration of the SCP training programme. The mentor should be a senior sign-off mentor-

practitioner who is on the same register as the registrant (nurses only). S/he must be a senior or specialist practitioner who is working in or familiar with the issues arising from advanced practice roles. S/he should also have received appropriate and recognised training for the mentor role. The clinical supervisor should be a consultant surgeon with validated experience and competence in teaching and assessment. Both should be appointed prior to commencing the training programme.

As an SCP, who am I responsible to?

The SCP is employed as a member of the extended surgical team and as such is clinically responsible to the consultant surgeon, who delegates aspects of perioperative care to the SCP. As a registered practitioner the SCP also has a professional and legal responsibility to the patient through professional codes of conduct and a duty of care. In addition, the SCP should follow the AfPP voluntary code of conduct for registered practitioners working in advancing surgical roles (accessible via the ASR SIG webpage, in the 'documents' tab).

Does the surgeon have to be in theatre with me? Whilst you are training the surgeon will provide direct supervision – i.e. scrubbed and standing alongside you. Once the surgeon is satisfied that you can work safely and competently within the SCP role, the surgeon can provide either indirect supervision – where the surgeon is unscrubbed but remains in theatre, or proximal supervision – where the surgeon is not in theatre, however, their location within the hospital is known and they are easily contactable.

What does the role involve? The role encompasses pre-, intra- and post-operative care. Under the direction of a consultant surgeon, the SCP may participate in:

- Preoperative assessment, including clinical history taking and physical examination
- Enhancing the communication link between theatre, patient and ward
- Involvement in the team completion of the 'Five Steps to Safer Surgery'
- Assisting with the preparation of the patient, including urinary catheterization, venepuncture, patient positioning and preparation
- Providing assistance with surgical procedures
- Some technical and operative procedures according to their scope of practice
- Facilitating the training of trainee surgeons
- Arranging appropriate pre- and postoperative investigations
- Post-operative care – including wound assessment & management
- Evaluation of care, including the discharge process, follows up care and outpatient activities.

Do I need to take out additional liability insurance?

Practitioners must ensure that liability insurance is up to date and sufficient for their level of practice. If the SCP role is recognised by your employing organisation, then you may be covered by vicarious liability. It is your responsibility to check with your employer or trade union that sufficient insurance is in place.

Are there policies about assisting in the private sector?

Each of the major independent sector providers is a member of the Association of Independent Healthcare Organisations. Member providers have policies in place regarding surgical assistance in their hospitals.

Is there an agency for assistants in the private sector?

The AfPP team are not aware of any agencies specializing in non-medically qualified surgical assistance.

I have been asked by one of my consultants to assist in the private sector. What should I do?

Firstly, you will need to ensure that you are not in breach of any of the terms of your NHS contract. NHS vicarious liability cover is not valid in the private sector so you should arrange appropriate professional indemnity insurance offered by a number of companies including AfPP, the Medical Defence Union and Medical Protection Society.

If there is time, contact the theatre manager of the private hospital you will be working in to ask what paperwork they will need from you and to introduce yourself – staff may not be familiar with the scope of practice of an SCP and this contact can help to avoid difficulties.

If this is not possible, ensure that you have a portfolio that contains:

- An up to date copy of your CV which includes details of your registration with your regulatory authority
- Proof of your Hepatitis B & C status
- Documents in support of your interventional role
- A copy of your job description

Do not under any circumstances be tempted to undertake surgical tasks outside your NHS job description / scope of practice; to do so would potentially invalidate your indemnity insurance and may result in you being reported to your regulatory authority by hospital staff. You are entitled to be paid for your services – do not be afraid to discuss this with your consultant. Keep a record of all monies paid as you may have to declare them for tax purposes.

If you have any further questions on undertaking or implementing the SCP role, please do not hesitate to contact AfPP on 01423 881300

References

Association for Perioperative Practice 2013 **Voluntary Code of Professional Conduct for Registered Practitioners in Advancing Surgical Roles** [Online] Available from www.afpp.org.uk

Health and Care Professions Council 2014 **Professional indemnity cover and your registration** [Online] Available from: <http://www.hcpc-uk.org/Assets/documents/1000476773851HCPCProfessionalindemnity.pdf> [Accessed October 2014]

Nursing and Midwifery Council 2013 **Professional indemnity** [Online] Available from: <http://www.nmc-uk.org/Registration/Professional-indemnity-arrangements/> [Accessed October 2014]

Royal College of Surgeons of England, 2013. *Surgical Care Practitioner (SCP)*. [Online] Available at: www.rcseng.ac.uk [Accessed March 2014].

Royal College of Surgeons of England 2014 **SCP curriculum** [Online] Available from: http://www.rcseng.ac.uk/surgeons/training/accreditation/surgical-care-practitioners-scps_ [Accessed March 2014]