

## **Brief Overview of the Education of the CST and CFA**

Surgical technology is the only profession that offers formal educational training to work in the roles of first scrub, second scrub, and circulating. All other professions learn the skills necessary to perform the duties within these roles through on-the-job training. Additionally, an increasing number of surgical technologists are learning the role of surgical assistant through formal education that incorporates didactics, practicing skills in a mock O.R. setting, and completing a surgical assistant rotation. Support for the formal education of the surgical technologist is established by three organizations: Association of Surgical Technologists (AST), Accreditation Review Committee on Education in Surgical Technology (ARC-ST), and National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting (NBSTSA – formerly the LCC-ST).

Beginning in the year 2000, AST formed the Core Curriculum for Surgical Technology Committee to begin the process of revising the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of the *Core Curriculum for Surgical Technology* that AST publishes. What began as concerns to update format, content, and presentation turned into a two-year project culminating in a landmark rebuilding of the entire curriculum that kept the essence of core O.R. practice intact, but reflects a look to the future of surgical practice by expanding and including curriculum based on the expanding technology used in the O.R. The result is the 5<sup>th</sup> edition *Core Curriculum for Surgical Technology*. In addition the Core Curriculum includes an expansion of several content areas such as discharge planning, health and wellness, PACU, homeostasis, and professionalism.

However, emphasis must be placed on one of the most important key components of the 5<sup>th</sup> edition Core Curriculum: For the first time case levels and clinical case requirements have been outlined, including outlined descriptions of the first scrub role with assist and solo. The significance of this is reflected by policies established by ARC-ST and NBSTSA.

ARC-ST is a commission on accreditation (COA) that is underneath the large umbrella of the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP). CAAHEP and ARC-ST establish the Standards and Guidelines for Education in Surgical Technology and the same for surgical assisting programs. A standard states that CAAHEP accredited surgical technology programs and programs seeking accreditation must base their program curriculum on the *Core Curriculum for Surgical Technology* and *Core Curriculum for Surgical Assisting*. Therefore, the surgical technology student must learn the content and meet the standards for surgical rotation as presented in the Core Curriculums in order for a program to retain CAAHEP accreditation.

Another landmark in the educational history of the surgical technologist has been the establishment of Outcomes Based Accreditation (OBA) by ARC-ST. Beginning in 2000 to coincide with the process of revising the Core Curriculum, ARC-ST worked on developing the policies for OBA. Surgical technology is the first allied health profession to have established processes and policies for OBA in surgical technology and surgical assisting education in order to stay current with the educational trends in the U.S.A.

Further support for surgical technology education and the changes that have occurred comes from the NBSTSA. March 1, 2000 – another landmark date in education. The policy as established by NBSTSA states an individual must be a graduate of a CAAHEP accredited surgical technology program to be eligible to take the national certification examination in order to earn the CST credential. Beginning 2007 the same type policy will be effective in order to take the national certification examination in order to earn the CFA credential.

Many other key factors as related to education deserve brief mention, but are provided in later detail in the Position Statements and Resolutions section of the book. These resolutions as approved by the AST Board of Directors and House of Delegates include:

- Accreditation Process Resolution.
- Certification Resolution
- Role of the Scrub Person Resolution
- Associate Degree Concept Resolution

As previously mentioned, surgical technologists and surgical assistants complete formal educational programs. These programs consist of didactic studies, practicing the skills in a lab/mock O.R. setting, and surgical rotation. Didactic studies consist of anatomy & physiology, microbiology, pharmacology & anesthesia, medical terminology, biomedical sciences that includes basics of physics, electricity, computers, and robotics in the operating room, surgical techniques, surgical procedures, and professionalism. Surgical assistants complete advanced courses in histology, surgical anatomy & physiology, pathophysiology, wound healing and closure, and manipulation of tissues. Also as previously mentioned the case levels for surgical rotation are presented in the *Core Curriculum for Surgical Technology*. For example, the minimum number of procedures that the surgical technology student must first scrub without assistance is 80 and the rotation must reflect first scrubbing procedures in the various surgical specialties. In conclusion, the surgical technologist and surgical assistant complete intensive studies in preparation for providing quality surgical patient care. This training is backed by the publications, policies, standards, and resolutions as established by AST, ARC-ST, and LCC-ST. This is further supported by the publication of the *AST Recommended Standards of Practice*.