



**Adopted BOD April 2008  
Updated BOD January 2013**

## **Guideline Statement for the Placement of the Sterile Suture Bag in the Sterile Field**

### **Introduction**

The principles of asepsis guide the actions used by the CST to ensure quality surgical patient care and the prevention of surgical site infections. These are the parameters that establish the standards for surgical patient care. Based upon these principles, CSTs perform their role related to patient care concepts to include creation and maintenance of the sterile field.

AST developed the following Guideline Statement to provide support to health care facilities (HCF) in the reinforcement of protocols as related to the principles of asepsis and specifically, the placement of the sterile suture bag in the sterile field. The purpose of this Guideline Statement is to provide an outline that health care providers in the perioperative setting can use to develop and implement policies and procedures for the placement of the sterile suture bag. The protocol example is presented with the understanding that it is the responsibility of the HCF to develop, approve, and establish policies and procedures for placement of the sterile suture bag according to established HCF protocols, state and federal medical laws. HCFs should develop policies and procedures related to the duties of each person on the surgical team regarding placement of the sterile suture bag in the sterile field. This includes integrating these policies and procedures with the facility's established protocols for creation of the sterile field.

### **AST Guideline Statement**

The sterile suture bag is a part of the sterile field. The CST should maintain the sterility of the bag upon creation of the sterile field and intraoperatively in order to uphold the principles of asepsis.

### **Example Protocol for the Placement of the Suture Bag**

Applicable Principles of Asepsis<sup>2</sup>

1. Only sterile items and sterilely attired individuals may contact sterile areas.
2. Only sterile members of the surgical team may touch sterile surfaces and items.
3. The top of a sterile draped table is considered the only portion that is sterile. The edges and sides of the drape that extend below the table top are considered contaminated.
4. Any item that extends or falls below the sterilely draped table edge is considered non-sterile.

### Recommendation

The sterile suture bag should be placed on the side of the sterilely draped Mayo stand opposite the operative site. This minimizes the risk of items, such as empty suture packets and suture ties that are placed in the bag, from entering the surgical wound site. According to the above listed principles of asepsis the sterile suture bag should not be hung from the back table.<sup>2</sup>

### Competency Statements

<b>Competency Statements</b>	<b>Measurable Criteria</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. CSTs are knowledgeable of the principles of asepsis.</li><li>2. CSTs monitor the perioperative environment and implement the principles of asepsis.</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The educational standards as established by the <i>Core Curriculum for Surgical Technology</i>.<sup>1</sup></li><li>2. The subject area of principles of asepsis and examples of applying the principles is included in the didactic studies as a surgical technology student.</li><li>3. Surgical technology students practice the application of the principles of asepsis in the mock OR setting including exhibiting the knowledge through skill check-off exams.</li><li>4. Surgical technology students apply the principles of asepsis during clinical rotation and are evaluated by instructors and preceptors.</li><li>5. CSTs apply the principles of asepsis in the perioperative setting as practitioners.</li><li>6. CSTs complete continuing education to remain current in their knowledge of sterile techniques.</li></ol>

## References

1. *Core Curriculum for Surgical Technology*. 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Littleton, CO: Association of Surgical Technologists; 2014.
2. Frey K, Ross T. eds. *Surgical Technology for the Surgical Technologist: A Positive Care Approach*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Clifton Park, NY: Delmar; 2014.