



Recommended Standards of Practice for Head Covers in the Operating Room

Introduction

The following Recommended Standards of Practice were researched and written by the AST Education and Professional Standards Committee and have been approved by the AST Board of Directors. They are effective April 13, 2007.

AST developed the following Recommended Standards of Practice to support health care facilities in the reinforcement of best practices, related to the wearing of head covers in the perioperative setting. The purpose of the Recommended Standards is to provide an outline that health care workers (HCW) in the perioperative setting can use to develop and implement policies and procedures for the wearing of head covers. The Recommended Standards are presented with the understanding that it is the responsibility of the health care facility to develop, approve, and establish policies and procedures for head covers according to established health care facility protocols.

Rationale

The human body is a major source of bacterial contamination in the surgical environment. Surgical site infections (SSI) have been traced to bacteria from the hair and scalp of surgical personnel.⁴ The purpose of head covering use while in semi-restricted and restricted areas of the surgical suite is to protect both the patient and staff by maintaining a limited microbial spread.³ In order to maintain a clean environment and adhere to OSHA regulations, a head covering that completely covers head and facial hair must be worn as part of the surgical attire.¹²

Standard of Practice I

The surgical team members are responsible for preventing SSI by properly donning and wearing the appropriate head cover or hood.

1. The surgical head cover or hood should be lint-free and cover all head and facial hair. Hair covers prevent the shedding of hair, squamous cells, and/or dandruff onto the scrub suit.^{4,9,10,11}
2. To prevent shedding onto the scrub suit, the first item of the surgical attire to be donned should be the hair cover.⁸
3. Net caps, caps or skullcaps that do not offer complete hair cover should not be worn in the surgical suite.
4. Disposable bouffant and hood head covers are the preferred types of head cover, and offer the optimal complete coverage of head and facial hair. Reusable cloth hair covers are not recommended.
5. It is recommended that individuals with facial hair wear a disposable hood in order to ensure complete coverage.

Standard of Practice II

The surgical department should follow recommended OSHA and CDC standards for PPE.

1. The surgical department should develop policies and procedures addressing the wearing of head covers by surgical personnel entering the semi-restricted and restricted areas of the surgical suite based on OSHA, CDC and APIC standards.
2. The use of reusable cloth caps is governed by the health care facility policies and procedures.
3. Reusable cloth caps should be laundered daily at a commercial laundry or in-house laundry.^{1,2}
4. If the reusable cloth cap becomes contaminated with blood or body fluids, it should be immediately removed and laundered by the commercial laundry or in-house laundry (CDC, 2003).⁵
5. Disposable bouffant and hood covers should be discarded in a designated receptacle after use. If the disposable hair cover becomes contaminated with blood or body fluids, it should be removed and discarded as soon as possible, and a clean head cover donned.

Competency Statements

Competency Statements	Measurable Criteria
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Certified Surgical Technologists (CSTs) and Certified First Assistants (CFAs) are knowledgeable of the importance of reducing bacterial spreading and contamination of the sterile field, as well as preventing SSI. 2. CSTs and CFAs are aware of the need to protect themselves and the patient from microbial and environmental hazards. 3. CSTs and CFAs wear PPE as an integral part of their daily hospital routine. 4. CSTs and CFAs utilize appropriate head and facial covering based on their knowledge of recommended OSHA and CDC regulations, and health-care facility policies and procedures for PPE. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Educational standards as established by the <i>Core Curriculum for Surgical Technology</i> and <i>Core Curriculum for Surgical Assisting</i>.^{6,7} 2. The subject area of surgical attire and PPE is included in the didactic studies of the surgical technology and surgical assistant student, including concepts of prevention of SSI. 3. Students demonstrate knowledge of the recommended practices of PPE in the lab/mock O.R. setting and during clinical rotation. 4. As practitioners, CSTs and CFAs apply the concepts of aseptic technique, wearing of PPE, and preventing SSI. 5. CSTs and CFAs complete continuing education to remain current in their knowledge of PPE standards, including annual review of the policies of the health care facility.

References

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