

New to Brachytherapy Nursing? Here are a few GENERAL questions to consider/ask to get to know your new specialty.

Learning a new specialty can be very challenging, especially one as unique and technical as brachytherapy. It can be hard for the new nurse/team member to know what to ask when you don't know enough about a specialty yet to begin to form your questions. This is true for both new and experienced nurses. While this list is far from complete and learning is a continual process, it can help provide you with a starting point for getting to know your team, the service you provide and the patients you care for.

It is important to know that rarely are two brachytherapy programs the same. Every service is unique in some way. Programs vary widely in patient volume, anatomical sites being treated, resources, physical spaces, professional backgrounds of team members, etc. Some brachytherapy programs utilize shared areas of the institution (such as main operating rooms or ambulatory surgery centers), while others perform procedures with anesthesia or moderate sedation within their department. For this reason, the more questions the new nurse asks, the better feel they can get for what specifics apply to their particular brachytherapy team.

Please note that some of these questions may not apply to all teams, such as questions about interstitial implants for teams that only practice intracavitary brachytherapy.

This list is just a start! If there are further questions that you have that you feel would be a good addition for new nurses to ask – please contact ABS Nursing at abs@americanbrachytherapy.org

GET TO KNOW YOUR TEAM AND BRACHYTHERAPY PROGRAM:

- 1) Who are the members of our brachytherapy team, and what are their roles?

- 2) Does our team use high dose rate (HDR), low dose rate (LDR) or another type of brachytherapy?

3) What anatomical sites does our team treat with brachytherapy?

4) What brachytherapy approaches do we use (interstitial, intracavitary, intraluminal, etc.)?

5) How long has our institution been doing brachytherapy?

6) What other treatments does our department offer (such as external beam radiation therapy or other oncologic treatments)?

7) Do our physicians do only brachytherapy, or do they split their service and offer other types of treatment as well (such as external beam radiation therapy)?

8) How many nurses are in our department, and what areas do they cover?

9) What is our average number of brachytherapy cases per day/week/month?

10) What type of brachytherapy treatment makes up our highest volume? (*Tip: It's helpful to become as familiar with possible with this type as early as you can.*)

If your team will be performing brachytherapy that involves ANESTHESIA or MODERATE SEDATION:

1) Where do procedures occur that require anesthesia at our facility?

2) Where do patients recover from anesthesia?

3) What type of anesthesia is used for these procedures (such as local/regional, MAC, general)?

4) When is anesthesia indicated for patients?

5) How do patients get scheduled for anesthesia or moderate sedation cases?

6) Who is responsible for coordinating pre-anesthesia clearance with the patient (labs, 12-lead EKG, clearance from primary care provider or cardiologist, etc?)

7) What is the flow for a patient undergoing brachytherapy requiring anesthesia from start to finish? Where do they start their day, what spaces and phases do they move through and where do they finish/go home from?

8) If a patient requires transport to or from the department, how does this occur?

9) What is my role as a brachytherapy nurse for our patients undergoing anesthesia for their procedure? *(This will vary greatly for different teams. For some teams, the nurse preps the patients and participates in the procedure as well as recovery. For other teams, the nurse will not see the patient until after the immediate perioperative period.)*

10) Do our patients ever stay overnight? If so, where does this occur?

11) Is moderate sedation (administered by nursing) given in our department? If yes, what is the patient population this is used for?

12) Will I be administering moderate sedation to brachytherapy patients?

13) (If yes to previous question) where does moderate sedation take place and what equipment is available? *(Review your institution's moderate sedation policy in detail and inquire about any required training).*

14) (If applicable) What does moderate sedation training consist of for nurses?

TYING THE BASICS ALL TOGETHER

1) What is a summary of my duties as a nurse on this brachytherapy team?

2) At what points do our patients receive education and what formats do we use?

3) If there are 5 top things I should know about our patients or specifics on the care they require, what are they?

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5) _____

*Questions? Comments? Please contact ABS Nursing at
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