

# Critical Thinking

The process of critical thinking requires many elements. It was noted in the article that critical thinking is a mode of reasoning and judgment. This requires the nurse to assess goals and purposes, questions and problems, information and data, conclusions and interpretations, concepts and theory, assumptions and presuppositions, implications and consequences, points of view, and frames of reference. (Huckaby, 2009).

I work in the surgical arena. We have patients in need of high risk surgical procedures with the possibility of large volume blood loss. Reasoning would establish that a patient having a high risk surgical procedure would have an increased risk of significant blood loss. A patient arrived in the pre op holding area to be prepared for surgery. He was scheduled to have a repair of an abdominal aortic aneurysm. The floor nurse, preop holding nurse, anesthesia, or circulator did not verify the availability of blood for the patient. After the procedure started they needed blood to prevent the patient from experiencing hypovolemic shock. The nurse called for the blood only to discover it was not available as the patient had not been typed and crossed. When a patient needs blood and they do not have any cross matched they must be given uncrossmatched blood. This places the patient at higher risk of complications of a reaction to the blood. Critical thinking was impeded in this situation.

- Purpose, goal, objectives: The purpose of gathering and verifying information is to ensure the patient will receive optimum care for his surgical procedure. The goal and objective is to have cross matched blood available to mitigate any possible large volume blood loss.
- Questions or problems to be solved: The following are possible questions the nurse should ask: What do I need for this patient undergoing a surgery that might involve significant blood loss? Is there an order for a type and cross match? Has the type and cross been done? Does the patient have a blood band and consent for administration of blood? What is the hemoglobin and hematocrit? Is the blood available?
  - Information, data, facts, and observations, experiences: The information and data that should have been verified was the hgb and hct, blood cross match, and availability. The experience of the nurses involved should have assisted in their understanding of the need for the availability of critical items.
  - Concepts, principles, theories, reasoning: It is reasonable to expect blood loss during repair of an aortic abdominal aneurysm.
  - Points of view: The nurses involved assumed the other had verified the cross match and availability of blood. The nurses were all experienced and trusted that the other had

checked everything out. This is one of the things that led to the error. By not implementing a systematic plan of care important patient issues can be missed.

- Implications, consequences: The patient not having blood readily available for the procedure can result in the patient experiencing hypovolemic shock, blood transfusion reaction from uncrossmatched blood, and possibly death.

In conclusion, by using critical thinking and universal intellectual standards many issues or problems can be avoided or treated more promptly. Critical thinking is a skill that can be developed and improves with experience and knowledge. It is important to safe patient care that we continually strive to use the nursing process, reasoning, judgment, and critical thinking in the care of our patients.

Reference:

Huckabay, L.M. (2009). Clinical Reasoned Judgment and the Nursing Process. *Nursing Forum*, 44 (2). p. 72-78.