

March 19, 1987

Sharon Hilton, RN~  
908 Old Metairie Place~  
Metairie, LA 70001~

Dear Ms.Hilton:~

At its regular meeting on March 19, 1987, the Board of Nursing deliberated on suturing by the registered nurse who is functioning as a First Assistant to a surgeon. After due deliberation, the Board adopted the following opinion:

.12

It is determined that the functions of the R.N. First Assistant be expanded to include the right to suture when the suturing is performed under the immediate and personal supervision of the primary surgeon and provided (s)he has had the appropriate education and technical experience and documentation of this is in said R.N. First Assistant's file (at place of employment).

The 1985 Guidelines for Registered Nurse Surgical First Assistants were revised in accord with the above opinion. A revised copy is enclosed for your file.

The Board members appreciated the opportunity to discuss this matter with you, Dr. Noel Mills and Ellen Badeaux.

If I can further assist you with nursing practice matters, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,~

Sister Lucie Leonard, MSN, RN~  
Nursing Practice Consultant~

## LOUISIANA STATE BOARD OF NURSING

### GUIDELINES FOR REGISTERED NURSE SURGICAL FIRST ASSISTANTS

The safety and welfare of the patient should be given primary consideration in the selection of a first assistant in surgery. Therefore, ideally, the first assistant to the surgeon should be a qualified physician. However, in those situations when a qualified physician is not available to assist, a registered nurse who has received specialized preparation may function in the role of a surgical first assistant.

Under the direct supervision of the operating surgeon, the registered nurse first assistant may perform the following functions as defined.

1. Provide exposure/handle tissue: retracting for physician's visibility.
2. Cauterize bleeders: applying electrode (current) to the instrument which the physician is holding in place.
3. Tie suture knots: tying knots in sutures after the physician has put them in place.
4. Suture: when performed under the immediate and personal supervision of the primary surgeon and provided the R.N. has the appropriate education and technical experience and documentation of this is in said R.N.'s file at the place of employment.

The registered nurse first assistant must perform only first assistant functions as outlined above and must not concurrently serve as a scrub or instrument "nurse."

The responsibility of functioning as a first assistant must be based on documented knowledge and skills. First assistant functions should be performed only after the responsibility has been granted by a credentialing committee established by the hospital. The Board recommends that nursing representation be included on the committee when privileges for nurses are under consideration.

Written policies and procedures should be available in hospitals utilizing registered nurse first assistants. An orientation to the operating room should be provided to first assistants who are not employees of the hospitals. The performance of registered nurse first assistants should be reviewed at least annually by the credentialing committee.

Adopted 5/31/85

Revised 3/19/87