

Role of Paramedics in High Volume High Quality Cataract Surgery

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Cataract is the common eye problem that affects more than 75% of the human race. It is mostly associated with aging, and can occur in small children too. Recent estimates of the World Health Organization suggest that there are nearly 40 million people who are blind worldwide, and that more than 90 percent of them reside in developing countries, nearly a sixth of them are in India. It is also evident that most of the blindness is preventable and curable. Based on the prevalence of blindness, the World Health Organization has launched a program **VISION 2020 – Right to Sight**. They operate with NGOs, to eliminate preventable blindness by the year 2020. The National Programme for Control of Blindness (NPCB) works with NGOs to launch outreach programs to create awareness and focus on preventive and curative efforts. This requires a lot of support from clinical personnel like Ophthalmologist and paramedical personnel.

In a vast country like India, the number of ophthalmologist as compared to the population is low. This is creating a great demand for qualified paramedics, who can provide significant clinical support, as well as satisfied patient care.

Paramedical Ophthalmic Assistants are multi skilled professionals. They assist the Physician, play a vital role in Patient Care Management, do both administrative and clinical duties, manage emergencies in situations / facilities / and personnel (staffing in the departments). They take patient histories, perform optical dispensing, test visual acuity and fields, assist the doctors in operation theatres, out Patient department, and Ward. They also function as coordinators of the department, trainers / instructors and also perform certain administrative tasks like:

1. Scheduling & receiving patient
2. Obtaining patients history / personal data
3. Maintain medical records
4. Handling telephone calls, Correspondence, reports, and filing
5. Issuing bills for claim, and credit collections
6. Maintaining patient's accounts and other financial records
7. Assuming responsibilities for office care, including supplies and equipment

The Paramedics are members of the medical community. These paramedical personnel should possess qualities to ensure patient satisfaction. That is :

1. A feeling for the People.
 2. Possess interest in Medical service.
 3. Ability to withstand situations without being emotional.
 4. Understand the difficulty / situation of the patient.
 5. Fondness to do the duty, at the right time and carry out their tasks in the best way.
 6. Have a Clean, modest, and simple appearance.
 7. Always alert to seeing what needs to be done at the right time. Like to manage the situations:
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- Explaining to the patient when the doctor is late.
- Making the patient feel comfortable at the time of examination by the ophthalmologist.
- Giving special help to the patients in emergencies and disabled situations.
- Providing maximum privacy for the patient with the doctor.

At the same time the ophthalmic assistant (OA) should have a long, intensive & comprehensive series of study in this field (Intensive training with theory & Viva).

1. Have a thorough and updated knowledge in Ophthalmic field.
2. Behave carefully, honestly & ethically, with dignity and respect for others.
3. Clearly communicate with the patient, and give proper instructions to the patient.
4. Approach the patient with warm & pleasant manner, so that the patient will feel wanted and cared for.

The Ophthalmic Assistant should also have the drive to update their knowledge and skills. Their competence in this field could be updated through regular CME training.

Aravind Eye Hospital, as a training institution started the Paramedical Ophthalmic Assistants training program in the year 1978. The Ophthalmic Assistants of Aravind are trained for 2 years and appointed in all its satellite hospitals.

They are trained to work in the Operation Theatre, Ward, Out Patient department, Counselling, and Refraction. They work in the Speciality clinics like Glaucoma, Cornea, Retina, Uvea, Orbit, Neuro, Paediatric and IOL Clinics. They are well trained to do most of the clinical procedures. Hence, the ophthalmologist are able to concentrate more on patient care in diagnosing and treatment.

Out Patient

- The OAs of the Out Patient department take the patient from the Reception to the Units I/ Unit II / Unit III.
- In the Units they do the preliminary check ups like BP, Tension, and duct for the appropriate



patient with ocular infection and other eye diseases.

- The OAs irrigate the eye and assist in removal of foreign body.
- They do the visual acuity test and muscle balance test for right patient and prescribe for glasses or recommend to the physicians.
- They escort the patient to the lab and to Specialty clinics like Glaucoma, Cornea, Pediatric, IOL, Retina, Orbit, Uvea and Neuro clinics depending on the type of Ocular problem.
- They do counselling at various levels like, while instilling eye drop, irrigating the eye, performing Tension and duct test, and preparing the patient for operation.
- Ordering, storing, and disposing of medical supplies.

The Paramedics help in streamlining the patient flow and keeps recording, scheduling and billing procedures from becoming cumbersome. This routine standardized patient flow helps the Ophthalmologist to treat more patients. The Paramedics are efficient in performing the clinical procedures with accuracy, conscious about the infection control and constantly monitor and assess every activity.

Counsellor

Effective counselling and treatment with full consent of the patient is the most important aspects in the patient satisfaction. The counsellors:

- Deal with the patient promptly, friendly and courteously.



- Assist the patient in decision making at the time of surgery.
- Provide information about the type of treatment, hospital facilities & clarify the doubts of the patient.
- Ease patient fear about the treatment.
- Motivate the patient for the treatment
- Pre and post operative counselling
- Remind the patient about review,



This approach could improve volume of patient flow and retain the review census.

Refractionist

The refractive errors are also one of the major causes for visual impairment. The para medics are equipped to perform

- Recording the visual acuity of the patient.
- Conducting subjective and objective refraction.

- Visual Fields
- Perform an accurate Ascan & Biometry procedure, to reduce the Post-operative refractive errors in high volume surgeries.



Ward

The paramedics follow the infection control procedures to avoid Nasocomial infections in the ward. The housekeeping procedure, mainly contribute to the healthy atmosphere in ward. The ophthalmic Assistants do pre and post operative counselling in wards. The paramedics visit the highrisk cases from time to time to check their vital signs and inform the Physician about their recovery. They are trained to educate the patient about the prognosis of the disease and give proper instructions to the patient and the attender at the time of discharge.



Operation Theatre

- The OAs assists the surgeons in the operation theatre.
- They give retrobulbar and facial block at the time of cataract Surgery.
- They recognize vital signs in critical patient.
- Prepare and instruct patient for examining and treatments.
- Escort the patient and assist the surgeons in Operation Room.
- Prepare operation theatre.
- Sterilizes and takes care for instruments and equipment.



The paramedics concentrate more on hypertension, cardiac, asthma and diabetic patient, especially at the time of surgery. They help in up-keep of a sterile environment. The paramedics serve as liaison between the patient and the surgeon. They maintain good relationship with other departments like OP and Ward, which also reduce the patient waiting time. Their pre-planning about every surgery also reduces anxiety / confusion in the operation theatre. The Ophthalmic Assistant arranges and verifies the drug stock and other required materials prior to the surgery. They inform the instruments department if

there is any flaw in the condition of the surgical equipment. This also makes easy for the surgeon, to perform more surgeries without any strain.

Most of the simple clinical procedures involve genuine hard work of the Paramedics. Therefore, it is essential that the paramedics should be equipped through standardized training program that would inculcate **Knowledge, Attitude and Skill** and commitment to service with compassion in action. In addition the organization motivates the paramedics by way of setting goals and targets. Their hard work and service greatly contribute to the success of this Organization.

Outreach programs and Paramedics

The Mobile Clinical treatment helps to reach 80% of a village population. The paramedics attend camps. They help in counselling, OP and in refraction cubicles. They help to fit more glasses in the camp spots and distribute them to the patient.

The technology update of the paramedics through Continuous Medical Education, Telemedicine programs, and working on latest equipments also improve the High quality of service.



Above all well structured training and motivation only would develop professional and committed paramedic staff who could contribute to the success of any High Volume and High Quality services.

Reference

1. *Paramedical contributions - for High Quality, Large Volume, Sustainable Cataract Surgery Programmes-QCS series*; Aravind Eye Hospitals & Postgraduate Institute of Ophthalmology, India, 2001