

Position Statement

Delineation of Clinical Privileges in Orthopaedic Surgery

This Position Statement was developed as an educational tool based on the opinion of the authors. It is not a product of a systematic review. Readers are encouraged to consider the information presented and reach their own conclusions.

Orthopaedics is the medical specialty that seeks to preserve and/or restore the form and function of the extremities, spine and associated structures by medical, surgical, and physical means. The process includes investigation into patient factors as well as ways and means to enhance outcomes in treatment.

Orthopaedic surgeons are physicians who have successfully completed a residency program (accredited by the Residency Review Committee for Orthopaedic Surgery) and met educational requirements in the diagnosis and care of disorders affecting the Musculoskeletal system to include the bones, joints, and soft tissues of the upper and lower extremities; the entire spine, including intervertebral disks; and the bony pelvis. Orthopaedic education includes experience with all patient age groups throughout the entire continuum of care as well as related clinical subjects including musculoskeletal imaging procedures, use and interpretation of clinical laboratory tests, care of musculoskeletal infections, use of prosthetics, orthotics, physical modalities and exercises, treatment of certain neurological and rheumatological disorders, and administration of local and regional, anesthesia.

Given the breadth and complexity of contemporary medical and surgical care, decisions regarding the granting of clinical privileges should be based upon a thorough consideration of each individual's qualifications rather than his or her identification with a specific profession. Each hospital medical staff should develop criteria for the delineation of clinical privileges which apply to all individuals who are permitted by law to provide patient care services independently. These criteria should serve as an objective framework from which to evaluate a practitioner's competence and should be clearly specified in the hospital's medical staff bylaws. At a minimum, these criteria should address licensure, training in the specialty, experience, current competence, and health (physical and mental) status.

Laws and regulations regarding the permitted scope of practice for physicians and other licensed independent practitioners, and interpretations of these laws, are subject to frequent amendment and vary substantially among the states. Individuals involved in delineating staff privileges should possess a working knowledge of and review these laws periodically.

Several additional reference materials may prove useful to hospital staff members responsible for privilege delineation, for example:

- Accreditation Manual for Hospitals, Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations
- Bylaws: A Guide for Hospital Medical Staffs, American Medical Association
- Delineation of Clinical Privileges: A Guide for Hospital Medical Staffs, American Medical Association

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Position Statement 1106

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