

# The Nurse's Role in Laser Procedures

Summary: The Dermatology Nurses' Association recognizes that lasers are becoming standard equipment in private practice and academic settings. The role of assistants in the delivery of laser light and the need for safety precautions has resulted in the implementation of this position statement.

The availability of lasers for dermatologic use began in the early 1980s. As more manufacturers developed laser products that target the skin at different spectrums of light, the more affordable and compact lasers have become.

Some academic institutions have Laser Safety Committees and a designated Laser Safety Officer. In some institutions, this officer is a nurse. Other institutions and many private practice offices have no formal Laser Safety Committee in place to offer guidelines and protocols for the medical director or the nursing support staff. Therefore, it is the position of the Dermatology Nurses' Association that:

- Nursing and health care workers in offices that offer their patients treatment with lasers, must ensure that laser safety precautions are followed and documented in the patient's medical record.
- All patient and nonpatient care is within the safety guidelines as documented in the ANSIZI guidelines.
- Nursing staff serving in the role of Laser Safety Officer will maintain the records of credentialing of physicians and other staff and will prohibit noncredentialed personnel, both physician and nonphysician, from participating in the delivery of laser light.
- Nurses who deliver laser light as part of their documented job description must practice within the guidelines of their State Board of Nursing, state Medical Board, institutional policy, and must exhibit and have documented appropriate competency and credentialing.
- Such nurses are strongly encouraged to participate in, pass, and document laser courses provided by professional organizations, such as the Dermatology Nurses' Association, physician organizations, and courses offered by the appropriate laser manufacturers.
- Such nurses will deliver laser light under the direct supervision of the physician who is on-site, utilizing established protocols that have been determined by the physician at the time of his/her consultation with the patient, or at each pretreatment session when applicable.
- Unlicensed Assistive Personnel who deliver laser light do so under the license and direct supervision of the physician in charge.
- The Dermatology Nurses' Association disavows responsibility or credentialing of individual members who choose to deliver laser light.

## References

*American National Standard for Safe Use of Lasers in Health Care Facilities (ANSIZI 136-1996)*  
*American Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgical Nurses (ASPRSN). (1998). Use of dermatologic laser and pulsed light therapy. Pitman, NJ: ASPRSN*

