



## **Enhancing Patient Outcomes Through Comprehensive Preoperative Assessments: The Collaborative Role of Dentists, Nurses, and Operating Room Technicians**

**Abdullah Hassan D Alhazmi<sup>1\*</sup>, Aminah Saeed H Almutairi<sup>2</sup>, Fidaa Abulrahman Saleh  
Almuhanna<sup>3</sup>, Mushyirah Jazaa Sahal Alanazi<sup>4</sup>, Ameen Abdullah H Alsultan<sup>5</sup>, Rayan  
Mohammed Gazi Alharbi<sup>6</sup>, Mohammed Mossa Alherz<sup>7</sup>, Taghreed Eid A Albalawi<sup>8</sup>, Maisa  
Kaseb Alkuwaykbi<sup>9</sup>, Munifa wagaf alogmani<sup>10</sup>, Mishkas Fayadh Khamis Alanazi<sup>11</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Dentist – Al Faisaliah Primary Health Care Center – Madinah Health Cluster – Ministry of Health – Madinah – Madinah Region – Saudi Arabia

\* **Corresponding Author Email:** Alhazmi19@moh.gov.sa - **ORCID:** 0000-0002-9907-3350

<sup>2</sup>Dental Assistant – Al Khaleej 2 Primary Health Care Center – Second Riyadh Health Cluster – Ministry of Health – Riyadh – Riyadh Region – Saudi Arabia

**Email:** Ameenhsa@moh.gov.sa - **ORCID:** 0000-0002-5447-3350

<sup>3</sup>Dental Assistant Technician – Al Jouf Specialized Dental Center – Al Jouf Health Cluster – Ministry of Health – Sakaka – Al Jouf Region – Saudi Arabia

**Email:** FiAlmuhanna@moh.gov.sa - **ORCID:** 0000-0002-5907-0150

<sup>4</sup>Dental Assistant – Branch of the Ministry of Health – Ministry of Health – Arar – Northern Borders Region – Saudi Arabia

**Email:** mjalenezy@moh.gov.sa - **ORCID:** 0000-0002-5807-5150

<sup>5</sup>General Dentist – Ministry of Health Office in Al Qurayyat – Ministry of Health – Al Qurayyat – Al Jouf Region – Saudi Arabia

**Email:** Dr.a.alsultan@hotmail.com - **ORCID:** 0000-0002-5707-6150

<sup>6</sup>Operation Rooms Technician – King Fahd Specialist Hospital, Buraidah – Al-Qassim Health Cluster – Ministry of Health – Buraidah – Al-Qassim Region – Saudi Arabia

**Email:** rayanma@moh.gov.sa - **ORCID:** 0000-0002-5607-7150

<sup>7</sup>Operation Room Technician – Al-Jaber ENT & Ophthalmology Hospital – Al-Ahsa Health Cluster – Ministry of Health – Al-Ahsa – Eastern Region – Saudi Arabia

**Email:** moalherz@moh.gov.sa - **ORCID:** 0000-0002-5507-4150

<sup>8</sup>Nursing Technician – Alwajh General Hospital – Tabuk Health Cluster – Ministry of Health – Al Wajh – Tabuk Region – Saudi Arabia

**Email:** telbalawi@moh.gov.sa - **ORCID:** 0000-0002-5407-3150

<sup>9</sup>Nursing Specialist – Turaif General Hospital – Northern Borders Health Cluster – Ministry of Health – Turaif – Northern Borders Region – Saudi Arabia

**Email:** Maysa19921@hotmail.com - **ORCID:** 0000-0002-5307-8150

<sup>10</sup>Nursing Technician – Qurayyat General Hospital – Al Jouf Health Cluster – Ministry of Health – Al Qurayyat – Al Jouf Region – Saudi Arabia

**Email:** maldogmani@moh.gov.sa - **ORCID:** 0000-0002-5207-2150

<sup>11</sup>Nursing Technician – Al-Zuhur Primary Health Care Center – Al Jouf Health Cluster – Ministry of Health – Sakaka – Al Jouf Region – Saudi Arabia

**Email:** Mshkas.Vip12@gmail.com - **ORCID:** 0000-0002-5107-9150

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**Abstract:**

Comprehensive preoperative assessments are fundamental to optimizing surgical outcomes, and their efficacy is significantly enhanced through the collaborative integration of dentists, nurses, and operating room technicians. This interprofessional approach moves beyond traditional models by systematically addressing multifaceted risk factors that often elude singular clinical perspectives. Dentists contribute critical expertise in mitigating oral-systemic health risks, such as preventing postoperative infections originating from periodontal pathogens. Nurses provide holistic evaluations encompassing psychosocial, physiological, and educational needs, ensuring patient-centered care coordination and advocacy. Operating room technicians translate patient-specific assessments into practical technical preparedness, ensuring equipment and procedural safety. Together, this collaborative framework fosters a synergistic safety net, leading to more accurate risk stratification, reduced complications like surgical site infections and cancellations, improved resource utilization, and enhanced patient safety and satisfaction. Ultimately, formalizing and supporting this interdisciplinary model is essential for advancing perioperative medicine, driving value-based care, and achieving superior patient outcomes across the surgical continuum.

**1. Introduction**

The preoperative period represents a pivotal juncture in the surgical continuum, where meticulous planning and evaluation fundamentally shape patient trajectories. Comprehensive preoperative assessments have emerged as a critical determinant of surgical success, directly correlating with reduced morbidity, mortality, and healthcare costs while enhancing patient satisfaction and recovery efficiency [1]. In contemporary healthcare, characterized by increasing patient complexity, aging populations, and heightened emphasis on value-based care, the imperative for thorough preoperative evaluation has intensified. The evolution of preoperative assessment reflects broader trends in medicine towards preventive, personalized, and patient-oriented care. Historically, preoperative evaluations were frequently limited to immediate physical examinations and basic laboratory tests, focusing predominantly on anesthetic fitness. However, modern perioperative medicine recognizes surgery as a profound physiological stressor, necessitating a comprehensive appraisal of the patient's overall health status to anticipate and mitigate potential complications [2]. This comprehensive approach encompasses detailed medical history, physical examination, functional capacity assessment, psychosocial evaluation, and review of medications and allergies, all tailored to the specific surgical procedure. Robust evidence underscores that such thorough preparation reduces postoperative complications such as surgical site infections, cardiovascular events, and respiratory failures, leading to shorter hospital stays and decreased readmission rates [3]. For instance, the identification and optimization of chronic conditions like diabetes, hypertension, or heart

failure prior to surgery can significantly alter intraoperative management and postoperative recovery pathways [4].

Beyond physical health, the psychosocial dimensions of preoperative care are increasingly acknowledged. Factors such as anxiety, depression, health literacy, social support, and socioeconomic status profoundly influence surgical outcomes, affecting everything from pain management to adherence to postoperative instructions [5]. Preoperative assessments thus serve as a platform for patient education, shared decision-making, and setting realistic expectations, which enhance patient engagement and compliance. The concept of "prehabilitation"—interventions aimed at improving physiological and psychological resilience before surgery—has gained traction, incorporating nutritional support, exercise programs, and stress reduction techniques, all of which are coordinated through comprehensive assessments [6]. This holistic view transforms the preoperative phase from a mere risk-screening exercise to an opportunity for therapeutic intervention and relationship-building between patients and healthcare providers.

Within this expansive framework, the contributions of dentists, nurses, and OR technicians are frequently marginalized, yet they are indispensable for addressing gaps in traditional assessment protocols. Dentists, for example, provide critical insights into oral health, which is intricately linked to systemic well-being. Poor oral hygiene, periodontal disease, and dental infections can lead to bacteremia, aspiration pneumonia, and surgical site infections, particularly in procedures involving the airway or in immunocompromised patients [7]. A dental evaluation can identify these risks and facilitate interventions like professional cleaning or extractions, thereby reducing postoperative infectious complications. Nurses, as the primary

point of contact for patients, conduct holistic assessments that integrate biomedical, psychological, and social data. Their role includes detailed history-taking, physical examinations, care coordination, and patient advocacy, ensuring that individual needs and preferences are central to the preoperative plan [8]. Operating room technicians, though primarily associated with intraoperative tasks, offer valuable technical perspectives on equipment needs, sterilization protocols, and procedural specifics, informing preoperative planning to ensure safety and efficiency.

## **2. The Importance of Comprehensive Preoperative Assessments**

Comprehensive preoperative assessments constitute the bedrock of safe surgical practice, serving as a proactive mechanism to identify, evaluate, and modify risk factors that could adversely affect patient outcomes. These assessments extend beyond routine physical examinations to encompass a multidimensional evaluation of the patient's physiological, psychological, and social readiness for surgery. The primary objective is to optimize the patient's condition, thereby minimizing the likelihood of intraoperative and postoperative complications [9]. Extensive research demonstrates that thorough preoperative preparation is associated with significant reductions in adverse events, including infections, thromboembolic events, cardiac arrests, and unplanned intensive care unit admissions [10]. For example, a meta-analysis by Sankar et al. revealed that structured preoperative assessments reduced postoperative mortality by up to 25% in elective surgeries, highlighting their life-saving potential [11].

Moreover, comprehensive preoperative assessments contribute to enhanced resource utilization and operational efficiency within healthcare systems. By identifying potential issues early, such as uncontrolled chronic diseases or necessary diagnostic tests, healthcare teams can plan accordingly, ensuring that appropriate personnel, equipment, and facilities are available. This proactive approach reduces surgical delays and cancellations, which are not only costly but also detrimental to patient morale and trust [12]. Additionally, preoperative assessments facilitate the development of individualized care plans that address specific patient needs. For instance, frail elderly patients may benefit from prehabilitation programs focusing on nutrition and exercise, while patients with obstructive sleep apnea may require specialized monitoring protocols [13]. This personalization aligns with the principles of precision medicine, where interventions are tailored

to individual risk profiles, thereby optimizing recovery trajectories and long-term functional outcomes.

The scope of comprehensive preoperative assessments has broadened to include evaluations of nutritional status, cognitive function, functional capacity, and psychosocial well-being. Malnutrition, often prevalent among surgical patients, impairs immune function and wound healing, leading to increased complication rates; thus, nutritional screening and intervention are crucial components [14]. Cognitive assessments, particularly in older adults, help identify risks for postoperative delirium and long-term cognitive decline, enabling preventive measures [15]. Functional capacity, measured through tools like the six-minute walk test or metabolic equivalents, provides insights into cardiopulmonary reserve, predicting tolerance to surgical stress [16]. Psychosocial factors, including anxiety, depression, and social support, influence pain perception, compliance, and recovery speed, underscoring the need for their integration into preoperative evaluations [17]. By addressing these diverse elements, comprehensive assessments ensure a holistic understanding of the patient, paving the way for robust surgical planning and interdisciplinary collaboration.

## **3. The Role of Dentists in Preoperative Assessments**

Dentists play a pivotal role in preoperative assessments by bridging the gap between oral health and systemic surgical outcomes. Oral infections, periodontal disease, and dental caries can serve as reservoirs for pathogens that may disseminate during surgery, leading to serious complications such as prosthetic joint infections, endocarditis, or pneumonia [18]. For patients undergoing procedures that involve intubation, poor oral health increases the risk of aspiration pneumonia due to the inhalation of oral bacteria [19]. Consequently, dental evaluations prior to surgery can identify and mitigate these risks through interventions like scaling, root planing, or extractions. Dentists assess the oral cavity for signs of infection, unstable teeth that could dislodge during airway management, and oral mucosal lesions that may indicate underlying systemic conditions [20]. This assessment is particularly vital for patients undergoing cardiothoracic, orthopedic, or head and neck surgeries, where oral pathogens are directly implicated in postoperative infections. Furthermore, dentists contribute to managing patients with comorbid conditions that intersect with oral health. Diabetic patients, for example,

often exhibit periodontitis, which can exacerbate glycemic instability and impair wound healing; preoperative dental care can thus aid in metabolic control [21]. Similarly, patients with cardiovascular diseases may require antibiotic prophylaxis for invasive dental procedures to prevent infective endocarditis, as per guidelines from the American Heart Association [22]. Dentists also evaluate for oral manifestations of systemic diseases such as osteoporosis, autoimmune disorders, or nutritional deficiencies, which can inform anesthesia and surgical planning [23]. By collaborating with the surgical team, dentists ensure that oral health considerations are integrated into the overall preoperative strategy, reducing the burden of preventable complications.

In addition to clinical interventions, dentists enhance patient education and preparedness. They provide guidance on maintaining optimal oral hygiene before and after surgery, which is crucial for preventing infections. For patients undergoing maxillofacial or dental procedures, dentists explain surgical details, expected outcomes, and postoperative care, thereby reducing anxiety and improving adherence [24]. Moreover, dentists can identify patients with dental phobias or anxiety that might affect their overall surgical experience and refer them for behavioral support if needed [25]. The integration of dentists into preoperative teams requires effective communication channels and shared electronic health records to facilitate timely information exchange. As healthcare moves towards interprofessional models, the role of dentists in preoperative care is poised to expand, ultimately contributing to safer surgeries and improved patient recovery.

#### **4. The Role of Nurses in Preoperative Assessments**

Nurses are central to preoperative assessments, providing a holistic, patient-centered approach that complements the technical evaluations of other professionals. Their role encompasses comprehensive history-taking, physical assessment, care coordination, and patient advocacy, ensuring that all aspects of the patient's well-being are considered. Nurses gather detailed medical, surgical, medication, and social histories, identifying risk factors such as allergies, substance use, or previous adverse reactions to anesthesia [26]. They also assess psychosocial factors including anxiety, depression, health literacy, and social support systems, which significantly influence surgical outcomes [27]. By establishing therapeutic relationships, nurses create an environment where patients feel comfortable

disclosing sensitive information, leading to more accurate risk assessments.

Physical assessments conducted by nurses include vital signs, nutritional status, skin integrity, and functional ability, which help detect conditions like hypertension, malnutrition, or pressure ulcers that require preoperative management [28]. Nurses employ standardized tools such as the Malnutrition Universal Screening Tool (MUST) or the Braden Scale for pressure ulcer risk to quantify risks and guide interventions [29]. Additionally, nurses play a crucial role in patient education, explaining preoperative instructions such as fasting guidelines, medication adjustments, and postoperative exercises like deep breathing and early mobilization. This education reduces anxiety, prevents complications, and promotes faster recovery [30]. Nurses also ensure that informed consent is obtained ethically, verifying that patients understand the procedure, risks, and alternatives [31].

Coordination is another critical facet of the nurse's role in preoperative assessments. Nurses liaise between various healthcare providers, including surgeons, anesthesiologists, dentists, and OR technicians, to ensure that all assessments are completed and findings are communicated effectively [32]. They manage preoperative testing schedules, follow up on abnormal results, and ensure that optimization measures are implemented. This coordination prevents delays and ensures that the patient is fully prepared for surgery. Moreover, nurses advocate for patients, particularly those from vulnerable populations, by addressing disparities in care and ensuring that individualized needs are met [33]. For example, nurses might arrange for interpreters, coordinate with social workers for socioeconomic challenges, or adjust care plans for patients with disabilities.

The nurse's role extends to risk assessment and prevention through the development of tailored care plans. Based on their evaluations, nurses implement strategies such as fall prevention for elderly patients, infection control measures for immunocompromised individuals, or anxiety reduction techniques for highly stressed patients [34]. In the context of enhanced recovery after surgery (ERAS) protocols, nurses are instrumental in executing preoperative components like carbohydrate loading and avoiding prolonged fasting, which have been shown to improve outcomes [35]. Through their comprehensive and empathetic approach, nurses ensure that preoperative assessments transcend physical readiness to include psychological and emotional preparation, thereby fostering resilience and cooperation in patients.

## 5. The Role of Operating Room Technicians in Preoperative Assessments

Operating room (OR) technicians, also known as surgical technologists, contribute significantly to preoperative assessments through their technical expertise and attention to procedural details. While their primary responsibilities revolve around intraoperative support, their involvement in preoperative planning enhances patient safety and operational efficiency. OR technicians are tasked with preparing the operating room, sterilizing instruments, and ensuring the availability and functionality of all necessary equipment [36]. Their insights into the technical aspects of surgery can inform preoperative planning by identifying specific instrument needs, potential equipment issues, or sterilization requirements based on the patient's condition and surgical procedure [37]. For instance, if a patient has a documented allergy to latex, OR technicians can verify that latex-free supplies are available, preventing allergic reactions. During preoperative assessments, OR technicians collaborate with nurses and surgeons to review surgical plans and anticipate requirements. Participation in preoperative team briefings allows OR technicians to highlight equipment limitations or suggest alternatives that could affect the surgical approach [38]. For patients with anatomical variations or previous surgeries, OR technicians might recommend specialized instruments or imaging tools to aid the surgeon. Additionally, OR technicians contribute to infection prevention by ensuring adherence to sterilization protocols and optimizing the operating environment. They assess the need for additional precautions, such as for patients with known infections or those undergoing contaminated surgeries, thereby reducing the risk of cross-contamination [39].

OR technicians also play a role in patient safety by performing equipment checks based on patient-specific needs. For example, for obese patients, OR technicians ensure that appropriate tables, positioning devices, and airway management tools are available to prevent pressure injuries and ensure adequate ventilation [40]. Moreover, OR technicians assist in planning patient positioning on the operating table, which requires understanding physical limitations identified during preoperative assessments, such as arthritis or contractures [41]. By addressing these details preoperatively, OR technicians help minimize intraoperative complications and improve surgical flow. Their contributions to efficiency include reducing setup times and avoiding last-minute equipment searches, which is crucial in high-turnover settings. Through

technical preparedness, OR technicians support the preoperative assessment process by translating patient-specific needs into practical actions, underscoring the value of including all team members in surgical planning.

## 6. Interprofessional Collaboration: Strategies and Benefits

Effective interprofessional collaboration among dentists, nurses, OR technicians, and other healthcare providers is essential for comprehensive preoperative assessments. Collaboration fosters a shared mental model of the patient's condition, aligns goals, and leverages diverse expertise to optimize care. Strategies to enhance collaboration include regular interdisciplinary meetings, shared electronic health records (EHRs), standardized communication tools, and joint training programs [42]. Interdisciplinary meetings, such as preoperative huddles or case conferences, allow team members to discuss patient cases, identify risks, and assign responsibilities. These meetings promote mutual respect and break down hierarchical barriers, encouraging input from all disciplines [43]. Shared EHRs facilitate real-time access to patient information, including dental records, nursing assessments, and surgical plans, ensuring that all team members are informed and can contribute effectively [44]. Standardized tools like checklists or protocols, such as the World Health Organization's Surgical Safety Checklist, incorporate contributions from various professionals and reduce errors by ensuring consistent communication [45].

The benefits of interprofessional collaboration in preoperative assessments are manifold. Firstly, it leads to more accurate and comprehensive risk identification. For example, a dentist might detect oral infections that a nurse or surgeon might miss, while a nurse might uncover psychosocial issues that affect compliance, and an OR technician might identify equipment needs based on patient anatomy [46]. Secondly, collaboration improves care coordination, reducing duplication of efforts and ensuring that all necessary interventions are completed before surgery. This coordination minimizes delays and cancellations, enhancing operating room efficiency and patient satisfaction [47]. Thirdly, collaborative assessments promote patient-centered care by considering all aspects of the patient's health and preferences. Patients feel more supported when they see a cohesive team working together, which can alleviate anxiety and improve trust in the healthcare system [48]. Finally, interprofessional collaboration fosters continuous learning and professional development, as team

members gain insights from each other's expertise and perspectives, leading to improved clinical skills and job satisfaction [49].

However, collaboration requires intentional effort and institutional support. Barriers such as time constraints, lack of familiarity with other professions' roles, and communication gaps must be addressed [50]. Solutions include scheduling dedicated collaboration time, providing interprofessional education, and using clear communication channels like SBAR (Situation, Background, Assessment, Recommendation) [51]. Leadership commitment is crucial to creating a culture that values teamwork and allocates resources for collaborative practices [52]. By investing in these strategies, healthcare organizations can harness the full potential of interprofessional collaboration, leading to enhanced patient outcomes and more resilient healthcare teams.

## 7. Case Studies or Examples of Enhanced Patient Outcomes

Real-world examples illustrate the tangible impact of collaborative preoperative assessments on patient outcomes. In a university hospital, a patient scheduled for elective joint replacement was referred for a dental assessment as part of a new preoperative protocol. The dentist identified severe periodontitis and recommended treatment before surgery. After undergoing scaling and root planing, the patient's oral health improved, and he proceeded to surgery without developing a prosthetic joint infection, a complication that had been prevalent in similar cases prior to the protocol's implementation [53]. In another instance, a nurse conducting a preoperative assessment for a patient undergoing abdominal surgery discovered through detailed medication review that the patient was taking over-the-counter supplements with anticoagulant properties. The nurse coordinated with the anesthesiologist and surgeon to adjust the medication plan, preventing excessive bleeding during surgery [54]. Additionally, an OR technician, upon reviewing the surgical plan for a patient with a history of multiple spinal surgeries, suggested using neuronavigation equipment to enhance precision. This recommendation was incorporated, leading to reduced operative time and improved neurological outcomes [55].

These cases demonstrate how the collaborative roles of dentists, nurses, and OR technicians directly enhance patient outcomes by addressing oral health, medication safety, and technical aspects, respectively. When integrated into a team-based approach, the benefits are amplified. A study

in a tertiary care center showed that implementing interprofessional preoperative assessments reduced surgical site infections by 30% and decreased hospital length of stay by an average of two days for major gastrointestinal surgeries [56]. Another study found that involving OR technicians in preoperative planning reduced equipment-related delays by 40%, increasing operating room throughput and staff satisfaction [57]. These outcomes underscore the value of comprehensive and collaborative preoperative assessments in improving clinical results and operational efficiency.

## 8. Challenges and Solutions in Collaborative Preoperative Assessments

Despite the evident benefits, implementing collaborative preoperative assessments faces several challenges. One major challenge is the traditional siloed nature of healthcare, where professionals work independently with limited interaction, leading to fragmented care and missed information [58]. Additionally, time pressures and high workloads often preclude thorough collaboration, as each professional is focused on their specific tasks, leaving little room for interdisciplinary communication [59]. Communication barriers, such as professional jargon, different documentation systems, or hierarchical structures, can hinder information sharing and mutual understanding [60]. Furthermore, lack of training in interprofessional collaboration leaves team members unsure of how to effectively work together, resulting in role confusion and conflict [61].

To overcome these challenges, healthcare institutions can adopt several solutions. Firstly, fostering a culture of teamwork through leadership endorsement and policy changes can break down silos. For example, establishing mandatory interdisciplinary preoperative meetings can ensure regular communication and shared decision-making [62]. Secondly, leveraging technology like integrated EHRs and communication platforms can streamline information exchange and save time, allowing team members to access and update patient data seamlessly [63]. Thirdly, providing interprofessional education and training programs can equip dentists, nurses, OR technicians, and others with the skills needed for collaborative practice, including communication, conflict resolution, and role clarification [64]. Simulations and team-building exercises can enhance mutual understanding and respect [65]. Lastly, allocating dedicated time and resources for collaboration, such as including collaboration time in schedules or

hiring coordinators, can mitigate workload issues [66]. By addressing these challenges proactively, healthcare systems can optimize preoperative assessments and improve patient outcomes.

## 9. Future Directions and Recommendations

The future of preoperative assessments lies in further integration of technology, personalized medicine, and expanded interprofessional collaboration. Advances in artificial intelligence (AI) and data analytics can enhance risk prediction by analyzing vast datasets from preoperative assessments, identifying patterns that human clinicians might overlook [67]. For example, AI algorithms could correlate oral health indicators with surgical outcomes, prompting automatic dental referrals. Personalized medicine approaches, based on genetic and biomarker profiles, could tailor preoperative interventions to individual patients, optimizing responses to anesthesia and surgery [68]. Additionally, the roles of dentists, nurses, and OR technicians should be formalized in national and institutional preoperative guidelines, ensuring their consistent involvement and recognition [69]. Recommendations for practice include developing standardized interprofessional preoperative assessment tools that incorporate inputs from all team members; implementing regular training on collaboration and communication; and promoting research on the impact of collaborative preoperative care on patient outcomes [70]. Healthcare organizations should invest in technologies that facilitate collaboration, such as shared digital platforms, and advocate for policies that support team-based care, including funding for interprofessional initiatives [71]. Furthermore, patient engagement should be emphasized, using preoperative assessments as an opportunity to involve patients as active partners in their care through decision aids and education materials [72]. By embracing these directions, the surgical community can move towards more holistic, efficient, and effective preoperative care, ultimately enhancing patient outcomes across diverse settings.

## 10. Conclusion

In conclusion, comprehensive preoperative assessments are vital for optimizing surgical outcomes, and the collaborative roles of dentists, nurses, and operating room technicians are indispensable in this process. Dentists contribute by addressing oral health issues that can lead to postoperative complications; nurses provide holistic assessments and coordinate care; and OR technicians ensure technical preparedness and

safety. Through interprofessional collaboration, these professionals create a synergistic effect that enhances risk identification, care coordination, and patient-centeredness. Despite challenges, strategies such as interdisciplinary meetings, shared electronic health records, and training can foster effective teamwork. As healthcare evolves, embracing collaborative preoperative assessments will be key to achieving safer surgeries, better patient experiences, and improved overall health outcomes.

## Author Statements:

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