

## **ORNAC would like to congratulate the winners of the 2021 Perioperative Nurses Week Contests:**

### **Video Submission Category:**

The BCIT Perioperative Specialty Nursing Program

### **Written Submission Category:**

Jill Clark RN, BScN, CPN(C), from Alberta. Their winning essay appears here.

## **L'AIISOC tient à féliciter les gagnants des concours de la Semaine des infirmières et infirmiers en soins périopératoires de 2021 :**

### **Catégorie Soumission vidéo :**

Le programme de soins périopératoires spécialisés du BCIT

### **Catégorie Soumission par écrit :**

Jill Clark, inf., B. Sc. Inf., CSP(C), de l'Alberta. Leurs articles gagnants apparaissent ici.

## **Pandemic Operations:**

### **Facing Adversity with Grace, Adapting and Evolving**

It all started in mid-March 2020 where everyone's lives were thrown off by COVID-19 and the subsequent global pandemic. All over Canada, schools periodically closed and moved online, businesses closed or re-vamped their operations, and everyone was on heightened health alert. And throughout this unprecedented time...some professions, businesses, and people were considered "essential" and their work continued to be able support those in need. This is where my story comes from. I am an Operating Room (OR) Registered Nurse. I am "essential"...people still become sick, fall, hurt themselves, are in accidents, or have health emergencies...a pandemic doesn't stop operations. But what I will tell you, is that it does change things profoundly.

So here is what I can tell you about being an OR Nurse though a Pandemic...or rather what I have learned so far... considering we are far from though this event. OR Nurses work extremely hard at the best of times. We are highly-skilled, exceptionally-trained people who go above and beyond for our patients. Every single OR nurse has worked overtime, gone hungry, had to pee but didn't, been in an incredibly stressful situation, and saved multiple lives. The pandemic has only added another element to an already fast-paced and challenging environment. So what has changed for us? We seem to be people well-suited to the unknown, to never give-up, and to be ready for any situation that comes through our OR doors.

Here is my own personal take on how the pandemic has affected me as an OR Nurse. I notice more tension, which

comes from a variety of sources. I notice my colleagues are stressed, worried and concerned about what we are facing and how much more of this we all can take physically, mentally and emotionally. We all know we have an important job to do and we take great pride in being "essential." Some of us have family members, significant others, or friends who have been fired, laid off, or their work has decreased significantly due to the pandemic. We are grateful for our jobs and having steady work, but this can be a double edged sword. It's good we are getting a paycheck and we can work, but we also are working very hard with capacity issues, very sick patients, rapid change, and a lot of unknowns. Someone said to me a while ago, "I have got so much done during COVID, it's been so nice to have time off and to take advantage of some great quality time with my family." This hasn't been my reality. I have worked full time during the Pandemic: no breaks, no extra time spent with my family, sometimes even extra shifts, and a lot more stress. Plus there is another element; the fear we all have, but don't really know how to talk about. We are all worried about bringing COVID home to our loved ones, families, and friends. Some of us have even changed our personal practices. I have a "work car" that only goes to work and the grocery store. My kids don't ride in it...it's considered potentially contaminated. My back boot room has become off limits to the rest of my family. I hang my work jacket and bag there, and then wipe everything down that I brought with me. I change in my laundry room, and sanitize my work clothes apart from everyone else's. I shower immediately. No more hugs from my boys as soon as I get in the door, those have to wait to keep everyone safe. The tension we feel, also

comes from work itself. We worry about our patients, and our colleagues constantly. We have COVID ORs, and we use them often. Things in the hospital seem to change by the minute, hour and day. Often when I come to work there is a new policy, algorithm, procedure, or something changed from the day before. It's hard to keep up sometimes, but being flexible keeps our patients and staff safe. We have multiple plans in place for what happens as our COVID cases increase, and our hospital and our communities we serve become overwhelmed. Sometimes our Nursing skills are needed elsewhere and we are transferred to other areas to help. Sometimes we wonder how much more of this we can go through. The unknown is worrisome and the Pandemic is not over yet. So the tension remains palpable. But we always carry on...it is our job and our patients need us more than ever right now.

Despite all this tension and worry, I have seen some incredible things. I have seen comradery increase as things get tough. Nurses reaching out to their colleagues and work family for support and advice, lending an ear when they need it, and helping each other. There is a newfound appreciation for my profession both personally, nationally, and globally. I have so much admiration and respect for my colleagues. We have been through a lot together. Perioperative Nursing is incredibly

challenging and rewarding at the same time. OR Nurses are incredibly resilient. We risk our own health and those who we love most, to give the best care we can to strangers, all because we care. We consistently adapt and evolve to our changing environment. Even when we don't want to come to work...when we would rather be home with our families and safe...we continue to show up, ready for anything and everything in the face of uncertainty. This is what we are trained to do, what we chose to do, and what we are continuing to do despite any challenge we may face.

Some People believe the Pandemic is teaching all of us things. It sure has taught me a lot. How to be grateful, more patient and kind to those around me, to persevere despite challenges, to not forget what matters most, to embrace change, and that out of fear comes great bonds and deeper understanding. I have never been prouder to be an OR Nurse, and at the same time I am just doing my job...something I have always loved...and if it's possible...continue to love more each day. I have grown so much already during the Pandemic as a person and a Nurse. Maybe this last year was all about that...growth, profound change, adaptation and resilience in the face of adversity, gratitude for the little things, and respect and empathy for those around me. This time has been incredibly humbling and one that I know I will never forget.

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