
PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

*Cathleen Ferguson RN, BScN, RNFA, CPN(C), ORNAC President, works as an RN First Assistant and is also the ERAS Coordinator at St. Martha's Regional Hospital in Antigonish, NS. She is a past member of the ORNAC Standards Committee, past Chair of the Nominations Committee, and Past President of ORNAC (2015-2017).
president@ornac.ca*



The theme for Perioperative Nurses Week this year was *Perioperative Nursing: Unified Voice for Excellence in Patient Safety*. The poster showed a patient surrounded by the whole Perioperative team. When we, as Perioperative Nurses, think of teamwork and collaboration that is what usually comes to mind – collaborating with an entire team of health care professionals in order to provide high-quality, safe, surgical care. After attending a recent event at our local hospital I began, however, to think about a unified voice as being more than just the team within the hospital walls.

I work at a small community hospital in the town of Antigonish, NS. We are, along with many healthcare facilities across Canada, are experiencing difficulties with recruitment and retention of surgeons, anesthesiologists, physicians, and nurses. These shortages affect not only the patients and the hospital staff but also patients' families and the community as a whole.

In order to deliver the best possible healthcare, hospitals must maintain strong relationships with their surrounding community. The physicians here in Antigonish organized an event called "Hopes & Dreams" that involved both hospital staff and the community. They wanted to highlight, as part of ongoing recruitment and retention efforts, that "Together We Are More" and to support this theme the event included creating a human chain around

"Unity is strength... when there is teamwork and collaboration wonderful things can be achieved."

- *Mattie Stepanek*

our hospital (St. Martha's Regional). The chain connected, by the holding of hands, the network of people that work at the hospital and the community members that benefit from our local health care services. To make this momentous "human chain" over 700 people were needed.

The organizers were amazed by the turnout they received – with enough turnout to create a chain that went around the hospital 2-3 times. It was amazing to witness the support from the community. I was moved by the people from the community that got up and spoke at the ceremony about the connection they felt to the hospital and to all that work there. The respect, admiration, and gratitude expressed was very heart warming. The day was inspirational and the aerial photo taken of the human chain is a great symbol of our unified voice and our shared commitment to strengthen our community and our hospital now and in the future.

The human chain not only gave a huge hug to the hospital but it also gave a huge hug to all of us who provide care to patients in our community. We don't

always see the effect we have on others nor do we often get an opportunity to hear the great respect and gratitude our patients and their families have towards us. Always remember, they trust us to provide excellence in patient safety and high-quality care but they also support us in many ways.

I hope during Perioperative Nurses Week you gave all of your co-workers and teams a (real or symbolic) hug for all the great work they work do. Most important give yourself a hug because you are very special. We are so lucky to have the opportunity to be part of our patients' journeys and to touch their lives.

If anyone has had an event like this at your site please share. All those who held events or celebrations during Perioperative Nurses Week should feel free to email me their photos and stories. I thank each and every one of you for the great work you do every day for your patients and their families across our great country. 🍁

Cathleen Ferguson