
PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

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By the time this issue is published Perioperative Nurses Week will be over. I hope that you all had a great week and took the time to celebrate yourselves and the work that you do every day for patients and their families.

This year's theme was "Proficiency & Competence: Own your own practice". My practice was put to the test when, in September, I joined a surgical mission in Madagascar with Operation Smile (a non-profit organization that provides free surgery for children born with cleft lip, cleft palate, and other facial deformities – www.operation-smile.org). This was my 8th mission and he has been different but all have been challenging in so many ways. In the past these missions have usually had the support of local nurses who help with our instruments and scrub in on most of the cases. This time, however, we had no local support and as a result we had to fill the roles of anaesthesia assistant, circulator, scrub, and medical device reprocessing. Everyone worked as a team, as always on these missions, and we managed to complete 118 cases in 5 surgery days. I attribute this to the fact that we were all dedicated to a common goal for our patients and their families. I met a lot of wonderful colleagues from around the world and was once again amazed at how similar our practices and standards are around the modern world.

The first days were very overwhelming as we got organized, tried to find our work-flow rhythm, and faced the hectic schedule ahead of us. I found it made me very focused on the work as we all met the challenge of the busy pace and the many roles to play.

On the second day I found myself under the OR table, on my hands and knees, trying to fix the cautery machine. I was hot, tired, and feeling a bit overwhelmed. There were three OR tables in my room and all were going full tilt.

I glanced up and I saw a young man bringing his child in to have surgery at the next table. The room was so busy and noisy and surgeries were going on that he and his child could see. Neither of them seemed bothered by the environment. This man and his family had walked for 5 days to the hospital hoping that the team would see his son and approve him for surgery.

The father had a big smile on his face and gently sat his son on the OR table. The child very calmly put the mask to his face and began taking deep breaths and was asleep in seconds. The father, before leaving, looked around the room and he smiled and nodded at each of us while thanking us for taking care of his son and the other children. It was an emotional moment. Suddenly the stress and tension I had been feeling just lifted away. I was

“A hero is an ordinary individual who finds the strength to persevere and endure in spite of overwhelming obstacles.”
- Christopher Reeve

reminded of why I had come here and I was filled with new energy and enthusiasm.

I will never forget how brave that little boy was and how calmly he picked up the mask himself – remembering so well what he had been taught by the pre-op nurse. And his father’s eyes... they were so grateful and filled with such pride and love for his son.

In our day to day work the trust and gratitude that patients feel toward us may not always be obvious. As perioperative nurses we have only mere minutes to develop a relationship with our patients before taking them into the OR suite. When they lie on the table they have put all their trust and faith in us and our abilities. A warm smile, a few soft words, and the touch of a caring hand can help make the patient’s journey easier.

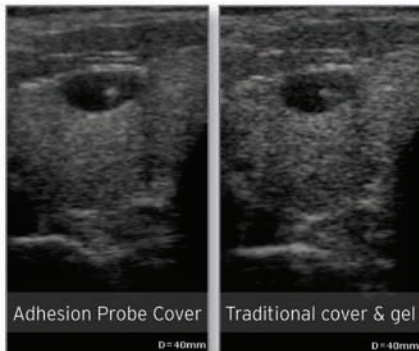
When I talk to patients after their experience they will often comment on the nurse who held their hand, or had a comforting look in his/her eyes, and that this made them feel less anxious. We are so fortunate to be able to touch people's lives, every day, in such a meaningful way. No matter how busy, overwhelmed, or stressed we may feel we can get through the tough days, together, if we take a few moments to reflect on the patient, why we are here, and how we help. Always remember how special you, and the work you do, is to your patients and their families! 🌟

Cathleen Ferguson



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