

SPOTLIGHT ON ORNAC MEMBERS

AN INTERVIEW WITH CHRIS MULFORD, RN, BSC (HONS)
NURSING, CPN(C)



By: Catherine Harley RN, eMBA, Executive Director, ORNAC



Chris Mulford, RN, BSc (Hons) Nursing, CPN(C), is a Perioperative Registered Nurse working as the Clinical Resource Leader in the Operating Rooms and Endoscopy departments at The Scarborough Hospital (TSH) in Scarborough, ON. Chris became a perioperative nurse in Scotland in 2003 and subsequently immigrated to Canada, in October 2005, in order to advance his perioperative nursing career. Chris currently resides in Whitby, ON, with his wife and two boys, and sits on the periOperative Registered Nurses of Greater Toronto (ORNGT) Executive as its Secretary.

Chris received his Baccalaureate, with honours in Nursing, from the Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen, Scotland, in 2003, and successfully completed his Perioperative Certification with the CNA in 2011.

Question: When did you know that you wanted to work in the OR and how long have you been working there?

During my final clinical placement as a nursing student, in the theatres of Aberdeen Royal Infirmary, in Scotland, it became clear to me that my passion was for perioperative nursing. I loved and welcomed the challenge that perioperative nursing brought to my daily work life. Over the past nine years I have worked both at the point of care and in a leadership position as a perioperative nurse... and I love it!

Question: How has your career in the OR progressed over the years?

I began my career as a theatre nurse in 2003 and continued in that vein until I immigrated to Canada in 2005. My sister was already living in Canada so I wanted to see what nursing opportunities would be open to me. Toronto Western Hospital (TWH), as part of the University Health Network (UHN), thankfully

offered me a position as perioperative nurse and I jumped at the chance. UHN also assisted me with my immigration process by submitting my Labor Market Opinion to Human Resources Development Canada in order to garner a three year work permit. I established my registration with the College of Nurses of Ontario and I wrote, and successfully passed, the Canadian Registered Nurses Exam in June 2004.

I then spent four years at UHN and during that time my career really blossomed. My abstract was accepted for the ORNAC conference in 2007 and I was overjoyed to do an oral paper presentation in front of my perioperative nursing peers.

Following the ORNAC conference I soon began preceptoring perioperative nursing students, and quickly recognized my love for educating nurses. That ultimately led me to being approached to take the position of Clinical Nurse Educator at TSH in January 2010 and this later transitioned into the role of Clinical Resource Leader for the Operating Rooms and Endoscopy.

Question: Are there many differences between working in an OR in the UK and working in Canada?

The work environments are very similar that's for sure, including instrumentation and common patient safety issues, but the fundamental difference is that of the ORNAC standards for perioperative nursing practice. The UK does of course have evidence based standards of care for perioperative nursing but I don't believe, to the best of my knowledge, that they have a speciality interest group like ORNAC supporting our practice.

Question: What is the biggest challenge in your role as the Clinical Resource Leader - Operating Rooms/Endoscopy?

This is a great question to ask an educator! I think one of the biggest challenges is that perioperative nurses sometimes think that the standards are black and white or that they are a perfect road map for perioperative nursing care. I respectfully disagree with this notion. Of course they guide our practice and the

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safety of our patients but they also require critical thinking and must be applied to the context of the various clinical situations you can find yourself in as a perioperative nurse.

Question: You became certified with the CNA in 2011. What advice do you have for perioperative registered nurses who are thinking about taking their CNA Certification Exam?

Just do it!! Every year I actively promote certification to my perioperative and gastroenterology nurses who are eligible. Being certified, in your area of expertise, means national recognition that you meet the minimum standards of care for your area of nursing practice. This is a very rewarding process and you will be proud to wear that gold pin showing off your certification!

Question: How did you become involved with the Executive for the periOperative Registered Nurses of Greater Toronto (ORNGT) and what have you learned by being involved?

I have my Patient Care Manager from my time at TWH, Rose Puopolo, to thank for this one! Our by-laws dictate that you have to be a full member for two years to be eligible for the ORNGT Executive. Rose nominated me, despite the fact that I had not yet been able to be a member for 2 years, and the

membership voted overwhelmingly to make an exception. I was honoured to accept my current position as Secretary.

ORNGT, by uniting perioperative nurses from across the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), is able to promote and optimize patient care, during the perioperative phase, by providing continuing education consistent with that of the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO) and certification requirements for the CPN(C) through the CNA.

Question: How has continuing education made a difference to your career path?

Continuing education is what has got me where I am today so it is vitally important. I have been active with ORNGT as a member and now as part of the Executive. I have attended conferences, as both a speaker and a delegate, and will continue to do so in the future. In 2011 I successfully completed my perioperative certification with the CNA and that was a proud moment as 15 of the nurses from the ORs at TSH were also successful. Next on the horizon will be entering into my Masters studies... something that is slated for 2013!

Question: What value do you see ORNAC bringing to the next generation of Perioperative Registered Nurses?

What excites me is that the ORNAC Board recognized that it needed a new strategic direction, which includes the new pillars displayed in the first ever edition of the ORNAC Journal, which is awesome by the way! This I believe will allow future perioperative registered nurses to be more engaged to the workings of ORNAC at the grass roots level, and will hopefully encourage younger RN's like myself to become involved at the regional level, and work their way up.

Question: What changes do you think we can expect to see in the future for perioperative RNs?

Some people may find this answer controversial but it's just my opinion. A lot of discussions have taken place in many provinces around the scope of practice of the RN and the Licensed Practical Nurse/Registered Practical Nurse (LPN/RPN) in the perioperative forum. In Ontario the RN and RPN (Ontario does not have LPNs) have had the same scope of practice since 2005. I believe there is a place for the RPN to circulate for certain case types, assess patients on admission to the OR, and assist anaesthesia.

These proposed changes to the model of care can only happen if the RN and RPN, with support of perioperative nursing leadership, collaborate to examine our patient population and assess the complexity, predictability and risk for all surgical procedures. This process could then provide the ability to determine the appropriate skill mix needed to have the right nurse, provide the right care, to the right patient at the right time. The RN will always be needed in the Operating Room but if we work together with our LPNs or RPNs we can build a strong cohesive team that provides the highest quality of care to our patients.

Question: Any words of advice for new registered nurses who are interested in career prospects in the OR?

A career as perioperative registered nurse is a rich and rewarding one. The patient is never more vulnerable than when they come to the Operating Room and they need the knowledge, skill and judgement of the perioperative RN to provide a safe environment for them to have surgery. I would strongly encourage all newly registered nurses to consider perioperative nursing as a career path. It is one of the best decisions I have ever made. 🍁