

Transitions and Challenges

By Mary Knight, RN, BScN, MN, CPN(C)

Another National Conference has come and gone, and wonderful memories have been created. Once again, the bar has been raised! On behalf of ORNAC, I would like to congratulate the 2001 National Conference Planning Committee on a very successful event, which truly took us on "A Surgical Odyssey". This edition of our Journal showcases many of the events and celebrations from Banff, and shows why we arrived at home exhausted!

For those of you unable to go to Banff, planning is well underway for the 18th National ORNAC Conference "Planting Ideas, Reaping Rewards" which will be held in Winnipeg, June 8-12, 2003. Start to plan your fundraisers now!

The ORNAC Board meetings are also a time to bid farewell to our outgoing Executive Board members. Donna Farid, Past President and Shelly Zareski, Treasurer both completed their terms on the ORNAC Board. Thank you for a job well done, and enjoy your newly found time! New members on the Executive are Gloria Nemecek, President-Elect and Sheila Biliard, Treasurer - welcome!

Our Editor and Publisher will be retiring this year. Agnes and Ron Forster have produced our Journal since 1983, a significant contribution to perioperative nursing in Canada! Thank you, and best wishes as you plan your well-deserved retirement.

This is indeed a time of transitions and challenges in both perioperative nursing and our profession in general. A nursing shortage has raised its head once again. Elective surgeries are being cancelled on both east and west coasts as negotiators attempt to resolve collective bargaining issues. Research has demonstrated that nurses are the sickest workers in the country, with more than 8% of the nursing workforce

absent in any given week because of sickness (Shamian & Villeneuve, 2000). And the Romanow Commission, established by the federal government, will begin to critically look at our healthcare system.

The Canadian Health Services Research Foundation has recently released a paper commissioned to answer two questions: "What is the impact of the working environment on the health of the nursing workforce (and thereby its impact on patient outcomes)" and, "What effective solutions could be implemented"? The report, "Commitment and Care: The benefits of a healthy workplace for nurses, their patients and the system" summarizes ideas for improving working conditions in healthcare, and can be found on their website: www.chsrf.ca

As perioperative nurses, we care for our patients when they are unable to advocate for themselves, and are dependent on our expertise and professionalism. According to Buresh & Gordon (2000), silent nurses are devalued. It is time to tell our stories and let the world know what we truly do. □

References

- Buresh, B. & Gordon, S. (2000, Fourth Quarter). From Silence to Voice. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*. pp.330 - 331.
- Shamian, J. & Villeneuve, M. (Fall 2000). Building a national nursing agenda: A timely response for the sickest workers in the country. *Hospital Quarterly*, pp. 16,18.

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The New Millennium: a Surgical Odyssey

By Ginette Lemire Rodger, RN, PhD.

Introduction

I am delighted to join you for your national conference to present the keynote address and to have the opportunity to meet many of you, particularly in this wonderful rocky mountains setting.

Having lived the last ten years in Alberta and being an avid hiker and skier, I am partial to this scenery, so much so that during my studies for my PhD. in Nursing at the University of Alberta, when came time to write my work. I packed cases of books and articles, and went to Jasper and worked surrounded by the rockies. My belief is that in such a grandiose place no one can do mediocre work. So, I know you will have a great conference.

The new millennium a surgical odyssey - the theme of your meeting seems especially appropriate, given all of the changes that we, as nurses, have lived through during the past decade. Odyssey aptly describes not only the breadth of the changes that have shaken our profession, but the tremendous revolution that has affected society as a whole - on a scale unprecedented in previous recorded history - as we move from the post-industrial age to the new information age.

While governments, policy makers and decision makers are trying to guide this social transition, we health professionals are calling for immediate action to ensure the current health care survives the transformation and grows to meet the demands of the public. Positioning nursing is then key to influence the future health services.

First, I will comment on the characteristics of the odyssey. Secondly, I will highlight the major impact on health care and nursing, and thirdly, I will conclude with ways to reposition nursing, both at the individual and collective levels.

I The Surgical Odyssey

The dictionary defines odyssey as a long series of wanderings, especially when filled with notable experiences, hardships etc. (Webster, 1989).

We have lived, and we are still living, in many work sites with a series of wanderings. Some of you as far back as five to six years ago (when the so-called reform started), and others are still in the midst of it.

Two years ago we and the public experienced a major unrest of nurses. Nurses, concerned with the uncertainty in health care and the quality of care, sounded the alarm from one end of the country to the other. This year, again, as negotiation resume nurses are concerned with the professional impact of new health policies and realities.

At the same time many new initiatives and opportunities are developing such as, new roles in surgery (nurses as first assistant), new techniques both inside and outside the OR doors, changes in professional nursing status, safety approaches, ethical dilemmas, legal issues, leadership, to name a few.

These wanderings as mentioned above are part and parcel of a much larger phenomenon A move from the post-industrial age to the information age. (Champy 1995) writes that we constitute the last generation of the industrial age and the first generation of the third wave.

Author

Ginette Lemire Rodger, RN, PhD, is the Chief of Nursing, Ottawa Hospital, Ottawa, Ontario, and President of the Canadian Nurses Association. Dr. Rodgers delivered the Valerie Shirreff Memorial Keynote Address at the 17th National Conference of the Operating Room Nurses Association of Canada in Banff, Alberta, April, 2001. This is an abridged version of her presentation.