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The Scope is a magazine which publishes articles featuring the perspective of nursing students and faculty. My name is Veronica Phillipson, and I am the Publicity Chair of Duquesne University Student Nurses’ Association. I collaborated with students and faculty to create The Scope.

The Student Nurses Association of Pennsylvania awarded The Scope in 2013, 2014, and 2016 the Excellent Newsletter Award. Past President Morgan Gruender and Vice President Emily Churchill established this awarded piece of work. The National Student Nurses Association awarded The Scope with the Newsletter Excellence Award in 2020. Past Vice President Lauren Bliss and Publicity Chair Hadley Mueller continued excellence of the Scope.

As nursing students, we have unique experiences to share with others. Whether this be an incredible internship in the operating room, a fantastic class experience with a professor, a proficient score on an exam, or a rapid response observation at clinical, the stories told are for the Duquesne University School of Nursing community to reflect on and learn from. The goal is to continue this newsletter and make The Scope a magazine for all Duquesne nursing students to be proud of.

I would love to hear your thoughts on this newsletter. Please email all comments and questions to me at phillipsonv@duq.edu. Letters to the editor must include your name, contact information, and major.

The views expressed in The Scope are individual and do not represent the views of Duquesne University or Duquesne University School of Nursing. I look forward to producing inspiring work that shares memorable stories.

Best,

Veronica Phillipson
NURSING is a jack of many trades with different areas that one can decide to practice in. While nursing schools attempt to get students into as many of these specialties as possible, it is simply impossible to allow exposure through rotations in all aspects of the hospital. Some areas that students often miss out on are Emergency Medicine, Family Practice, and Perioperative services. Therefore, when I was asked which areas I would be interested in exploring through my externship this past summer, I told them that I was extremely interested in the OR due to a lifelong obsession with Grey’s Anatomy. It was to my great surprise when they informed me about the rotational program that they offer in the summer. The rotational program allows students to spend time in each of the perioperative areas including the following: pre-operative and post-operative, operating room (OR), and the Post Anesthesia Care Unit (PACU). I happily accepted my offer to participate and awaited the summer months where my journey would begin.

On my first day, I was taken directly into the robot room of the OR. This is where surgeons, surgical techs, nurses, and anesthesiologists were all jamming along to summer hits of the ‘90s. I remember thinking to myself, “this is the place I want to be for the rest of my life.” As my 4 weeks in the OR went on, I got to sit in the room with renowned doctors and watch them perform numerous procedures, but I must admit I felt like the smallest fish in that pond. There were so many words thrown around that I had no knowledge of. It is quite intimidating to be in a room with such intelligent individuals. Despite this subtle blow to my confidence, the OR was an incredibly unique experience that I was so grateful to have, even if it made me realize that the job of an OR nurse was not so much for me.

When my time at the OR commenced, it was time to move to pre-op and post-op. Since I was used to watching fascinating procedures all day, I was a little worried that I would be bored in pre-op and post-op. To my surprise, I absolutely loved my time in this rotation. Contrary to the OR, I was so excited to finally perform the simplest tasks because I knew what I was doing. Let me tell you, I’ve never been so eager to take vitals before in my life. It was also nice to have conversations with patients and ease any nerves they had about the procedure they were undergoing. In the post-op area, I’ve never had any patients be as grateful for a sip of water because they hadn’t been able to eat or drink anything that day, and it was heart-warming that the smallest acts meant so much to these patients. Additionally, the staff were all so extremely welcoming and made the experience that much more enjoyable.

Finally, my trip to the PACU was a great transition for my critical care rotation this fall. Again, these were things that I had no prior experience with. There was a lot of teaching required for me. My preceptor in the PACU was always patient and happily answered any and all questions that I had. The nurses cared for patients directly out of the OR until the patients were taken to post-op where they would be discharged, or up to the floor to reside in a bed for their overnight stay after major procedures. There were a wide variety of patients through this area. It was extremely helpful to have some experience in a critical care environment before learning the information in the critical care lecture. I had experience with pain medications and even learned to read rhythm strips which gave me a head start for the fall semester critical care course.

Overall, I’m extremely grateful for all my experiences this past summer. I encourage any nursing student to leap at any chance they get to visit any of these areas. Even if you are unsure if you would enjoy perioperative care as a nurse, seeing the different roles and how they all work together as a team to take care of the patient is a fascinating experience.
I was never a fan of medical anything while I was in school as well as when I entered the work world as a newly graduated in 1976. I just knew I wanted to work where the “action” was—that was surgical nursing. At that time Mercy Hospital (still independent at that time) was my answer. It was the time of the first major nursing shortage. We all had our choice of where we could work. I chose the Intermediate Care Unit—with Ventilator dependent patients siloed in a 4-bed suite of their own.

14 new Graduate Nurses were assigned to this unit on the 4th floor of Mercy. There were more Graduate Nurses vs Staff Registered Nurses.

Right out of the gate that set me up for concern. Questions arose in my new nurse brain— is nursing for me??? Do I need to leave and go to a smaller hospital??? Who was really going to preceptor me?? I never took care of anyone on a ventilator—how do I manage this?? And the list goes on.

After a discussion with my family, I decided to resign and go to a smaller hospital. The nurse recruiter stated that there were several other positions opened and would I reconsider. I did—transferred to the Recovery Room. I told the nurse recruiter that I would give it 2 weeks to see if it was really for me. I stayed 10 years. This was my first introduction to Surgery.

Mercy became a level 1 trauma center during my tenure there. I became trauma certified. I took care of the sickest patients—more ventilators than I ever had seen and patients from every service line. Hips, knees, radical neck dissections, Harrington rods on children, laryngectomies, many gunshot wounds as well as stabbings—and much more.

The operating rooms (ORs) were very busy at Mercy. It was all hands on deck when help was needed. So into the ORs—I went to help. I was cross-trained to assist. I was also going to Duquesne to complete my master’s degree at night. I married and finished graduate school. It was now time to move up, and to move up I had to move out. I worked as a Nurse manager in a small hospital that was poorly managed. I then soon left. I went to West Penn Hospital as the manager of Surgical Short Stay when then evolved into Manager of Peri-Operative Services. I worked with the best of the best nursing managers and leaders. Pre-operative, Intraoperative, as well as post-operative responsibilities, became my responsibility as well as my passion. I also oversaw the Surgical Clinics and started a Pain Management Service.

Always with mergers and acquisitions comes more change. The Western Pennsylvania Hospital became the West Penn Allegheny Health System in 2000. Movement occurred within management for both Nursing leaders and Physician leaders. There was a need to reorganize Forbes Regional Hospital in the East Hills of Pittsburgh. I was recruited by physician and hospital leadership to go there as the new Director of Surgical Services. This is where I really fell in love with the Operating Room and Peri-Operative Services. I was responsible for the GI lab, Central Sterile Processing, Pre-Operative area, Post-Operative area, as well as Anesthesia Operations.

I have had the privilege of leading the Surgical Services division in all three major health systems in the western Pennsylvania area. The job is exciting, fast-pace, quick on your feet daily operations.

My administrative philosophy is that I will never ask a staff member to do something I would not do myself. I educated myself in all areas of my responsibility. I did learn so very much from both good days in the Surgical Services division as well as the bad days. I am very thankful for a wonderful career and the great opportunities that came with this job.

Surgical Services Career Pathway—why did I go this direction???

LILLIAN LONGO
ADJUNCT FACULTY - DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF NURSING
BSN 1976- DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY
MLS 1987- DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY
The summer going into senior year every nursing student is faced with a big decision on what they want to do that summer to further their education and experiences in nursing. This is the summer when internships and externships become available as well as many other opportunities. Being that I am from Dublin, Ohio, I was torn as to whether I wanted to stay in Pittsburgh for the summer or if I wanted to go back home. This dilemma caused me a lot of stress and anxiety. Suddenly, in God’s good timing, an amazing opportunity back home was presented to me. I never realized the impact connections have on getting a job until this one popped up.

When I was only ten years old, I broke my jaw in a bike accident and needed my jaw wired shut. Describing this accident as traumatic is an understatement. During this particularly hard time, the surgeon who performed the surgery left such an extraordinary impact on my family and me. We vowed to always stick with the same oral surgeon after the incredible work he did. Fast forward eleven years, I went back to the same surgeon and had my wisdom teeth removed. Suddenly, I remembered why I loved this office so much. The staff was so kind, and the atmosphere was so positive. Fortunately for me, they happened to be looking for a part-time surgical assistant for the summer of 2021. I decided to accept the position to work at Oral & Facial Surgeons of Ohio as a surgical assistant. Though I hadn’t been interested in this particular kind of surgery, I have always had a desire to work in outpatient surgery. This was the perfect opportunity to try something new and to see if this would be something I could see myself doing in the future.

On my first day, I was a little overwhelmed by the tasks my job entailed. It was a little bit of everything... sterilizing surgical instruments, setting up surgical trays, and helping with post-op patients. A lot of this was brand new to me. To my surprise, my skills came fairly quickly with the help and patience of all my co-workers. I soon realized how much I loved the environment of an outpatient surgical office. Everyone worked together and helped each other out. I felt a sense of community right away.

Being the curious nursing student that I am, I was eager to go and witness a surgery. As soon as the surgeons and staff knew I was interested, they invited me to observe surgeries, and the surgeons explained everything they were doing. As the summer went on, I was eventually able to assist with suctioning in some of the surgeries. Though I was timid in doing such a task, I was comforted by the patience of the surgeons and assistants.

Working in an outpatient surgery setting is so different than the hospital environment. One difference is that everything is scheduled. For those that love organization and planning, working in an outpatient surgical office is ideal. Secondly, due to the more relaxed environment, I felt like I was able to spend more time with the patients compared to my experiences in the hospital. And lastly, I really enjoyed the sense of community that I shared with my co-workers. I really loved getting to work with the same people every day. I am so thankful to have had this experience because it confirmed my interest in this field of nursing. As a nursing student, you see many things in the clinical environment, but outpatient surgery is not one of them. There are so many different fields and settings of nursing to explore. If there are any nursing students out there that believe the hospital environment is not their home, I highly recommend exploring an outpatient surgical office!
The summer going into my senior year of nursing school I was in a panic. The NCLEX exam was all anyone was talking about. Job applications would soon become my main priority. Suddenly, my 4-year degree was only a few months away from being complete. Luckily, I was one of two nursing students this past summer who had the opportunity to work at the Children’s Hospital operating room.

The experiences and exposure I acquired this summer in the operating room were truly one of a kind and helped calm my nerves. Obviously, surgical nursing is not a specialty taught in the standard nursing school curriculum. With this being the case, any and all time spent in the operating room was priceless. One of the reasons this time was so valuable was because everything was brand new. Never before had I watched life-saving surgeries from just inches away. Everything I saw in the operating room was thrilling, scary, and breathtaking all at the same time. I received a little taste of everything from appendectomies to craniotomies to wisdom teeth extractions.

The most important thing I learned from my time in the operating room was how crucial teamwork is and how effective it can be when performed properly. The operating can most certainly be chaotic at times; however, it is the most controlled and organized chaos I have ever witnessed. Everyone knows what their role is and can perform it perfectly.

The scrub technicians know every single piece of equipment and what they are used for. The nurses know every medication and intervention that has been implemented on the field. Of course, the surgeons get their hands dirty and perform life-saving measures you are used to watching in your favorite Grey’s Anatomy episode. This well-oiled machine seems to be unstoppable and capable of handling any complication that may come their way.

Everyone respects one another and trusts that their coworkers are more than capable of performing their roles. This created an environment I quickly found myself addicted to. The excitement left me wanting more and my capability of applying my nursing knowledge kept me intrigued.

Despite the majority of the information being new, I was still able to provide and assist in simple nursing skills such as patient positioning, basic assessment, and medication draws. I truly cannot speak any higher about my experience in the operating room.

My experience this summer really made me think about where I want to work in the future. The excitement I experienced every day in the operating room was something I knew I wanted to maintain in my nursing career. Because of this, I plan on applying to different operating rooms and emergency rooms within the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC) and Allegheny Health Network hospital systems. I can honestly say the surgical nursing experience I had this summer changed my life for the best.
This summer, I was blessed to have an externship in the Operating Room (OR) at Allegheny General Hospital (AGH) here in Pittsburgh! I always had an interest in surgical nursing as a whole, and I wanted an opportunity to get some experience in the field before graduating. Unfortunately, nursing students do not get the opportunity to partake in clinical in the OR. So, I decided to apply to externships specifically in this concentration. I am so happy that I made this decision to step out of my comfort zone.

In my specific program, I spent at least a week in one of eight perioperative settings. This included preoperative, post anesthesia care unit, Gastrointestinal lab, outpatient surgery, and the four main OR specialties at AGH: general, orthopedics, cardiovascular, and neurosurgery. By the end of the externship, I gained knowledge and understanding of the patient experience from the moment they were admitted before surgery to when they were discharged. I was able to see many interesting and complex surgeries including open heart, brain, and joint replacement procedures. The longest surgery I was a part of was a 10-hour Whipple.

Surgical nursing is a whole different kind of nursing. In the OR, tasks are centered on setting up the room, positioning the patient, retrieving the correct supplies, and charting. This may sound routine; however, you have to be quick on your toes at all times because you may need to run out of the room to get tools or supplies if a patient has a complication in surgery. It is also very important to maintain good relationships with the surgeons, scrub techs, and others in the OR. As the nurse, it is your responsibility to understand everyone’s preferences and every aspect of that specific surgery. A lot of behind the scenes goes into surgical nursing including maintaining time to stay on schedule, memorizing the location of the hundreds, and keeping your surgeon happy.

As the circulating nurse in the room, I performed all tasks with my preceptors observing. By the end of the externship, I felt confident in interviewing the patient, setting up the room, prepping the patient, completing timeouts, charting, post-operative assessments, inserting intravenous catheters (IVs), and inserting foleys all on my own.

If you don’t believe bedside nursing is for you, I would definitely consider looking into surgical nursing! Not to mention the hours are great with minimal nights and no weekends or holidays!

Throughout my externship, I even got to shadow a few nurse anesthetists, and I was hooked! After shadowing once, I asked my boss to let me shadow for a second and third time. Anesthesia has always been an interest for me. After seeing a CRNA in action, it is now my career goal. Being a nurse anesthetist would combine my interest in the OR and push me to have higher-level thinking, critical care experience, and hold a graduate degree! After graduating, I plan to work in a cardiovascular ICU for a few years before applying to graduate schools.

I am thankful for my externship because this experience solidified what kind of nurse I want to be. Fellow students, please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions about my externship and OR nursing in general! Nursing is by far not limited to being a bedside nurse. I think it is important to know all your options to find the best fit for you! CONTACT: LISTONC1@DUQ.EDU
As exams approach, you might experience some sense of anticipation, anxiousness, and tension. You are not the only one who has experienced these symptoms. It is so easy to feel overwhelmed when you have three exams to study for within one week. For some of you, time management is crucial for balancing a part-time job and school. Since the pandemic began, I started to think about how to study and thrive while experiencing all these emotions. Here, I have compiled some tips that have worked for me in the past, and hopefully for you as well.

Have you ever driven somewhere and forgotten why you are supposed to be there in the first place? Our minds can wander from one place to another within a couple of seconds. According to Matthew Sockolov, mindfulness is the practice of being in the present moment (p. 13, 2018). Being in the moment requires you to step into the present moment and notice where you are, along with what you are doing. You can start simply where you are right now by noticing your inhalation and exhalation as you are reading this. Does your exhalation take a bit longer to finish before your next breathing cycle? Does your breathing feel more constricted because you carry all those stresses on your shoulder? Maybe take this time to sit upright wherever you are and roll your shoulders back. As you inhale for the next breathing cycle, I invite you to take a longer inhalation. As you exhale, slowly let out the air out and feel the air moving through your lungs and your nasal cavity. Do this practice for 3-4 breathing cycles and observe any changes. Breathing mindfully is one way to add mindfulness practice into your life!

I found that grounding helped me stay calm for exams in the past. Grounding practices involve all your five senses. During your upcoming exams, I invite you to use all your senses. Bring your mind and body together and be present in the moment. Maybe first notice your body such as the weight of your chair and wriggling your toes. As you begin your study or exams, take this moment to touch any object you may have on your table. It could be your laptop or your pencil, for example. Notice the texture, colors, weight, and temperature. I usually carry a grounding object such as my crystal necklace with me. Whenever I have exams, I usually touch my necklace to bring a sense of calm and help prevent me from overthinking.

Have you ever driven somewhere and forgotten why you are supposed to be there in the first place? Our minds can wander from one place to another within a couple of seconds. According to Matthew Sockolov, mindfulness is the practice of being in the present moment (p. 13, 2018). Being in the moment requires you to step into the present moment and notice where you are, along with what you are doing. You can start simply where you are right now by noticing your inhalation and exhalation as you are reading this. Does your exhalation take a bit longer to finish before your next breathing cycle? Does your breathing feel more constricted because you carry all those stresses on your shoulder? Maybe take this time to sit upright wherever you are and roll your shoulders back. As you inhale for the next breathing cycle, I invite you to take a longer inhalation. As you exhale, slowly let out the air out and feel the air moving through your lungs and your nasal cavity. Do this practice for 3-4 breathing cycles and observe any changes. Breathing mindfully is one way to add mindfulness practice into your life!

You can start simply by clenching your hands as you inhale and releasing them as you exhale. It is easy to study without taking a break especially when the midterm exams are right around the corner. Maybe take a 15-minute walk around the campus and notice the changes in your surroundings. Start simple. Find what works for your schedule and your body. For me, yoga has been my anchor throughout my time in school and the military. For some of you, it might be spinning and hiking. Take some time to figure out what works best for you!

I want to end this article on a positive note. As future nurses, we are learning how to take care of our patients with empathy, compassion, and caring. Nursing school can easily lead to burnout. I invite you to take this moment to take some time today for you. I hope some of these tools can help you with your studying as you prepare for your exams.

Mindfulness can be done at any time.

Grounding techniques can work wonders!
Meeting & Credits

Upcoming Meeting
December 6TH 9PM via Zoom

Credit Opportunities Coming Up
[Just the] Facts, Period: October 28th at 7pm

Halloween Karaoke: Friday, October 29 at Towers MPR at 8:30-11:30 pm

Milkshake Factory: Monday, November 1st from 4-7pm

Self-Defense Class: Monday, November 8th at the Union Africa Room at 7-8pm

Holiday Party: Wednesday, December 8th at Fisher 719 from 4-6pm

NCLEX PRACTICE QUESTION

A nurse is reviewing the health records of several clients in postanesthesia care unit (PACU) to identify risk factors that can lead to postoperative complications. Which of the following clients are at risk for complications? (Select all that apply)
A. A client who has a WBC of 22,500/uL
B. A client who uses an insulin pump
C. A client taking insulin daily
D. A client who has a bowel prep
E. A client who has a BMI of 26

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**Banana bread recipe**

**Ingredients:**
- 1 cup sugar
- ⅓ cup softened butter
- 2 eggs
- 1 ½ ripe bananas (3-4 medium sized)
- ⅓ cup water
- 1 ⅔ cup flour
- 1 tsp baking soda
- ½ tsp salt
- ¼ tsp baking powder
- ½ cup chocolate chips

**Directions:**
Mix sugar and butter then stir in the eggs. Next add the water and mashed bananas. Beat for 30 seconds. Stir in the remaining ingredients until combined.

Bake at 350° for 50-60 minutes.

**NCLEX practice answer**
Correct Answers: A, B, C, D

**Interested in writing for the Scope?**

I am always looking for new writers!
Contact Veronica Phillipson.
phillipsonv@duq.edu