Celebrating the nurses who look after patients ‘under the knife’

Did you ever wonder who actually looks after you while you’re ‘under the knife’, in surgery?

In 2015-206, 9866 elective surgeries were performed in Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service facilities. What many patients don’t realise is that while they’re on the operating table they have dedicated perioperative nurses looking after them.

It is Perioperative Nurses Week (9 - 15 October 2016) and the Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service (SCHHS) is proud to celebrate the more than 170 perioperative nurses in its hospitals at Nambour, Caloundra and Gympie.

Safety improvement support officer for perioperative, Ruth Melville said the focus of perioperative nurses was on working together as a team to keep the patient safe during surgery.

“We are the eyes and ears of the patient while they’re anaesthetised,” Ms Melville said.

Ms Melville has been a perioperative nurse at SCHHS for more than 30 years, and is also the President of the International Federation of Perioperative Nurses.

“I always knew nursing was for me. I started my nursing training right out of high school and was put on the theatre rotation at Nambour General Hospital. Although I was nervous about working in the operating theatre, I found it was my niche and absolutely loved it!” Ms Melville said.

“We are passionate about what we do, about patient care and about the greater good.”

Catherine Toal has been a perioperative nurse for nine years.

As an anaesthetic nurse in the perioperative team at Nambour General Hospital, Ms Toal’s primary role is to assist the anaesthetist and provide support to the patient throughout their perioperative journey.

“Having surgery can be a very anxious experience for most patients, you can feel very vulnerable,” Ms Toal said.

“The anaesthetic nurse is the patient’s advocate, speaking for the patient when they can’t.

“It is very rewarding to care for a patient when they are at their most vulnerable, to be part of a team whose primary focus is helping the patient,” she said.

Ms Toal said perioperative nursing can often be a bit mysterious to those outside of the perioperative environment.
“Not a lot is known about what happens behind the closed theatre doors,” she said.

“I can tell you: the perioperative environment is a unique area where teamwork is crucial, where you always expect the unexpected, where technology and innovation is encouraged, where problem solving and trouble shooting is part of the everyday and where patient safety is paramount.

“There is never a dull day in theatre!” she said.

INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITY

**What:** Perioperative nurses at Nambour General Hospital celebrate Perioperative Nurses Week with a cake.
**When:** 10am, Friday 14 October 2016
**Where:** Nambour General Hospital (meet in main reception).

ENDS

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