

### 1956 – Formation of the “Theatre Supervisors” group

During 1956 three operating room supervisors, with the help of the registered nurse representative of Johnson and Johnson Pty. Ltd. realised the need for operating room supervisors to meet and share ideas, to provide support for each other and to allow for progress in this area of nursing.

These registered nurses were

- Miss Spence from Royal North Shore Hospital,
- Miss Sturtridge from Royal Alexandra Hospital for Children, and
- Sister Mary Gabriel from St. Vincent’s Hospital, Sydney.

It was because of these nurses' insight and inspiration that the "*Theatre Supervisors' Group of NSW*" was inaugurated in July 1957, with Sister Mary Gabriel as the first President. Contact with metropolitan Sydney hospitals' room supervisors brought new members into the Theatre Supervisors' Group of NSW.

The *Theatre Supervisors' Group of NSW* was highly successful, supplying an answer to many problems that were discussed, and Saturday afternoon lectures were organised at St. Vincent's Hospital and conducted by Dr. Radcliffe. This followed with the meetings being held at different metropolitan hospitals and this contributed considerably toward the successful beginning, introducing members to different hospitals and conducting tours of their operating rooms.

### 1962 – Formation of “NSW OTA”

Before long it was decided that it was too restricting to limit the *Theatre Supervisors' Group of NSW* to supervisors only and so the name of the Group was altered to the "*New South Wales Operating Theatre Association*" (NSW OTA) in 1962. This allowed all registered nurses employed in operating suites to join and share their experiences.

### Membership, Growth & Expansion

The membership has gradually grown and now encompasses the Sydney, Newcastle & Wollongong metropolitan areas, the NSW country areas and the ACT. From the initial membership of three people in 1957, there was a rapid increase in membership due to the widening of the membership criteria and since that time, membership has increased: by 1985 to over 500 and in recent times to around 1200.

By 1972, the executive committee recognised the need to create grouping of members by geographical location and so NSW & ACT were split into Zones.

Zone 0-	Sydney metropolitan area
Zone 1 -	Hunter & Central Coast Region
Zone 2 -	Central West Region
Zone 3 -	New England & Orana Region
Zone 4 -	Riverina & Murray Region
Zone 5 -	North Coast Region
Zone 6 -	Illawarra & Southern Region
Zone 7 -	ACT

These zones have strengthened and enriched our association, allowing all our members to participate in sharing perioperative nursing.

The Association became an Incorporation in 1991.

## **Education**

From the very beginning, there has been a strong focus on education and practice and specialised topics of education have been a feature since the group was founded. Each decade has seen changes in surgical technique, anaesthesia and operating suite nursing practice.

"Exchange of Ideas" programs were introduced in 1974, with a full weekend program on current interest topics on operating room nursing, education and research, held in our Zone areas with NSW OTA speakers leading the discussions.

Initially the NSW College of Nursing and the NSW OTA combined their resources to present these programs and the program was recognised by the Health Department of NSW as a continuing education project. These programs provided an input of ideas to both city and country members. Our members gave their own time to participate at these weekends. The purpose was to improve the standard of patient care in our operating rooms.

These programs are now conducted and organised by each Zone. Members of the Executive Committee attend and contribute to the educational program.

### **General Meetings**

The general meetings for Sydney (Zone 0) were held on the second Wednesday of the month until 2007. There would be a guest speaker and then a general meeting was held. Meetings were first held at the NSW College of Nursing and then various hospitals. Meeting attendance has fluctuated over the years. Work practices, family commitments, location and time are all factors that influence attendance at meetings. We saw a need to change this structure and began to provide a full or half day seminar 3 or 4 times a year, which incorporates the General Meetings. Currently there is a Professional Day for Education, Recovery, Anaesthetics and Instrument/circulating nurses. The Education team arrange for guest speakers to talk and a range of topics are covered with the aim of our members enhancing their knowledge.

## **Communication**

1967 – NSW OTA "Forceps" journal introduced

The growth of the Association was helped enormously by the introduction of the journal "Forceps" in 1967. Rita Stahl was the first editor and pioneered this very effective means of communication.

In those early days it was a journal produced entirely by operating room nurses from copy to printing, stapling, wrapping and posting. Subsequently it was possible to have the journal professionally printed and for many years this was produced three to four times a year.

The journal was very dependent on receiving articles from our members and during 1972-73 our operating rooms experienced staff shortages and work pressure and did have a recess and finally produced a smaller journal "Forceps Junior". In 1976-77 there was a revival of "Forceps" due to the inspiration and hard work of Jane Spaeth, the editor and Colleen Taylor, the sub-editor. This journal was circulated quarterly and was dependent on current articles from members to keep it dynamic. The editorship of "Forceps" changed hands several times but each new editor provided the inspiration and dynamic support that is a mainspring of communication to our members everywhere.

1986 – National "ACORN" journal introduced

In 1986 the Australian Confederation of Operating Room Nurses (ACORN) agreed to combine the NSW journal "Forceps", the Victorian journal "Snippets" and the ACORN News published in Davis & Geck's "Gown & Gloves" into one national journal. These three publications were printed as a combined journal for one year and then in 1987 the ACORN Journal, The Journal of Perioperative Nursing in Australia was produced. This journal is circulated quarterly to all members of each State Operating Room Nurses organisation.

In recent years members of the OTA have received a newsletter "Suitetalk" and with the electronic age resulting in many enhancements, many members now receive the newsletter electronically.

## **NSW OTA annual conferences**

An annual conference and trade exhibition has been held since the nineteen sixties. In the early days these were conducted for us by the NSW College of Nursing and we will always appreciate and be grateful for the help, cooperation and encouragement that we received from the College, for our Professional days and for the use of College premises for our meeting venue in the past.

From 1974 to 1990 we held our Conference at Bankstown Civic Centre. This complex was ideal and provided space for our activities and allowed for an excellent quality Trade Exhibition.

Since 1991 the Annual Conference has been held at the Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre, Darling Harbour which allowed for more space as our conferences expanded. In an effort to reduce costs, 1999 saw a change of venue to the AJC Function Centre, Royal Randwick Racecourse.

In Early 2000, there was a call by conference attendees for the conference to be held out in the Zones or be relocated back into Sydney city centre. Following discussion with the trade to determine if they would support a conference held out of Sydney, it was agreed this was viable for them in the opposite year of the ACORN National Conference. In 2004, the Annual Conference was held at Star City at Darling Harbour, Sydney. This was a very successful conference and had one of the highest attendances.

In 2005 as agreed, the annual conference was held outside of Sydney in Canberra at the National Convention Centre. Our members made the journey and allowed it to be a very successful conference. We then returned to Sydney and chose the Hilton Hotel Complex in 2006. For the organisations 50<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations we returned to the Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre.

## **2007 – 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

In 2007 NSW OTA celebrated it's 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. The main celebrations were held at the annual conference. We are very grateful to Judith Cornell for writing a booklet to reflect the history and activities of NSW OTA's first fifty years. On the evening before the start of the conference a dinner was held and all previous presidents, life members and some company representatives who have been supporters of the organisation since its early days were invited.

## **National Organisation**

### **1977 – first ACORN conference and formation of ACORN**

The year 1977 proved to be a milestone for Australian operating room nurses with the first Australasian National Conference for Operating Room Nurses with NSW Co-ordinator, Judith Cornell, as Chairperson for the Conference.

At this Conference it was decided to form an Australian Confederation of Operating Room Nurses (ACORN) and in 1978 the Inaugural Meeting of ACORN was held with each of the six Australian States as member bodies of this national body. Two representatives from each State make up the National Council with an Executive being elected from the host State for the Triennial National Conference.

The purpose of this National body was to look into all aspects of nursing practice in the operating room and to organise and conduct a National Conference each three years to bring operating room nurses together on a national level to discuss operating room nursing issues.

Today each state and the Northern Territory have two members on the ACORN board and their role is as a Director and representative. ACORN now hold a national conference biannually.

### **1980 – first ACORN Standards**

Resolutions presented at the first ACORN Conference provided a framework for each of the States to develop the ACORN Standards, Guidelines and Policy Statements presented at the Conference in 1980. The ACORN Standards, Guidelines and Policy Statements are reviewed regularly and new editions presented at the National Conference.

Prior to ACORN developing Standards, Guidelines and Policy Statements, the NSW OTA developed a set of State standards to give guidelines to all operating suites to maintain a standard of excellence in patient care in the

operating suite. These standards were based on the philosophy of the NSW OTA - a shared belief that the practice of nursing in the operating suite correlates operating room nursing with pre, intra and post-operative patient care to provide a continuity patient care during surgical intervention. These State standards have now been superseded by those from ACORN, but remain in the archives for historical reference.

### **NSW OTA activities**

#### With NSW Ministry of Health

NSW OTA has been active in developing and implementing many projects over the years including the standardisation of

- Operating Room Linen
- Operating Room Handling of Sponges, Swabs and Instruments policy
- a state-wide Operating Room Registered Nurses Report
- Operating Room Incident Form.
- Surginet

The OTA has had representation on many state and national committees thus allowing the OTA to have input into many areas in health policy that have an impact on operating suite nursing practice. In addition, many individuals have held places on committees, councils and advisory boards and it is this involvement with other organizations that has ensured the highest possible standards of practice and also has served to keep the profile of the OTA so high.

#### **Research Activities, Grants & Scholarships**

The OTA has always encouraged its members to become actively involved in research projects and has funded a number of projects over the years. The OTA has also been able to assist members to attend state, interstate, national and international conferences by offering financial assistance.

Scholarships have also been available to assist perioperative nurses to complete studies and assist their careers