

**Deborah Carter attended and presented at EORNA 2015, Rome.**

### **The funds for this grant were donated in memory of Judith Cornell**

Perioperative conferences are always great venues for networking with colleagues working in similar specialty areas. When the conference is overseas it is a fabulous excuse to network on a world wide scale, but even more importantly to appreciate that our issues are also global issues.

After attending the 2012 EORNA conference in Lisbon I had planned to attend again in Rome. The fact that this conference tied in with two of my son's international travels made it a very special experience, combining work and pleasure.

The EORNA, European Operating Room Nurses Association held the 2015 conference in Rome, the eternal city. The location set the theme for the conference – "The Art of Perioperative Care: Eternally evolving." As I looked through the program for this conference and reflected on the many conferences and education days that I have attended in the past ten years, I can see that everything old is new again.

I am not suggesting that the topics are uninteresting, because we need to revisit many of the subjects and they are always presented with a different perspective. It does however, make you question, why we are not learning from our mistakes, but also appreciating that the human factor is always going to exist no matter how much education we provide.

The opening ceremony of the EORNA conference is as exciting as the opening ceremony of the Olympics, with much cheering and flag waving as the member nations are introduced, many flag bearers wear national costume. At the completion of the formal introductions, other countries attending are named amidst further cheering and flag waving – flags provided. It is an uplifting start setting the tone for the education sessions and the networking opportunities that will be part of this amazing experience.

I have to admire many of our colleagues whose first language is not English – as this is the official congress language. Speaking in front of peers is always daunting, so speaking in another language adds an extra level of complexity. The parallel sessions are grouped and titled, including sessions on 'supporting Actors in the OR', discussing technician or non-nursing roles which I heard caused some animated discussions. The session named "Take time to care for OR Nurses", discussed job satisfaction, burnout, bullying and work environments. Different ways of learning had an education focus but looked at the development of standards and recommended practices for EORNA – the standards were released at the conference and aimed to standardise European evidence based practice.

Welcome to the OR looked at patient anxiety and preoperative visits, discussing connectivity with the patient in the ten most important seconds before anaesthetic intervention. During this session there was an innovative trial of clown doctors in paediatric perioperative care. Around the world included sessions of interest from around the world. I spoke about evolving and expanding an Australian Perioperative environment, a personal journey that increased our environment from 12 to 18 operating theatres, the good, the bad and the disappointments. It was great to speak on day one, I was able to relax and enjoy all the presentations after that.

The hot topic, "To Reuse or not to use", caused much discussion. The topics in this segment started with sustainable Perioperative practice and discussed recycling. The second talk was about Reprocessing single use medical devices and the regulations for Europe, with the discussion centred around the American model and the legal ramifications of reprocessing single use items, the benefits to the environment and cost comparisons between new and reprocessed devices.

The priority session on day two was Professor Judith Tanner, from the UK, who spoke about current issues in surgical site infections. This was the best presentation that I attended, after initially thinking 'boring!', a comment that Judith herself made, she put a different twist on this subject, and had the crowd enthralled. Her team sent letters to 60 patients that had wound infections, nine out of seventeen did not know they had an infection, thought that the antibiotics were normal and had no idea why they had a deep SSI. Three of the seventeen had tried to find help, had no success and were eventually readmitted. Judith's take home message was to blame and shame, to make it real so that staff feel responsibility, in most cases the information never gets back to the theatre team. If there is one talk you all need to hear, this is it!

An issue close to my heart was the one session that needed a larger room, a discussion about sterile services and instrument handling. Unfortunately it was competing with Ruth Melville and Phyllis Davis so I missed part of the

session. Four presentations on Sterile Services discussed traceability and efficiency, working with damaged instruments, professionalisation and transparent, basic education for the sterilising technicians. Lack of education, both formal and informal, in these departments in many parts of the world are at the root of the problems that perioperative nurses face when the instruments are not clean, not correct or not available. It led me to reflect on the fact that surgeons have specialised, many instrument nurses have specialised and yet we have an expectation that the staff in our sterilising departments know every instrument, every tray and every individual item. They are at the centre of every operating theatre and are overlooked on so many levels.

Saturday night was party night, a fabulous meal in a great venue, lots of dancing and a sing-a-long on the way home. Many global issues can be discussed and resolved, after a few Italian wines, on the bus home from the conference dinner with Irish and Norwegian colleagues. A quick rest and back to the Erfige palace for the last day of formalities, my choice of sessions was resource management, presentations on efficiencies in surgery using the lean process and six sigma, nursing workforce planning in Turkey and working efficiently and effectively on night shift, provided some great stimulation and take home messages. The priority session was given by Jan De Boek, asking if we can change the perioperative world today. He is an inspiring speaker, who I had enjoyed previously and always presents a realistic view of our work load due to his perioperative background.

The closing ceremony was exciting and presented Crete as the next host city in 2017, unfortunately the conference was over, fortunately the holiday was just beginning, so I headed off with my sons to see the eternal city, share gelato on the Vatican fore court and enjoy a quiet Sunday in Rome. Looking after myself for four weeks before returning to my workplace to look after my fabulous team and share my experience.

Deborah Carter