

Leadership Conference

I never really saw myself as a leader in our perioperative department until I commenced in the position of Nurse Manager. I was asked to join our management team after working many years following the education path. Last year I attended a session run by Dr Michael West who talked about reliable and self-care for leaders and about how important it was to be a compassionate leader. I realised that being a compassionate leader and one who listens to their staff is invaluable when leading a team and I became more interested in how leaders can make a difference to a workplace.

By attending the ACORN Leadership Summit, I was able to have more of an understanding of leadership and the role it plays in a workplace environment. One of the main points I came away with from this 2-day conference was that not all leaders are managers and not all managers are leaders. Leadership can be learnt but it is also in the make-up of a person and often they don't realise they are a leader.

The 2 ½ day conference at East Hotel in Canberra, commenced on the Thursday afternoon with a session on ACORN's vision for the future of the organisation run by ACORN President, Rebecca East and Randall Pearce who have been working together to look at ways to change the culture of the ACORN standards so that they are more recognised throughout Australia. With strategic planning there is a positive vibe with the ACORN committee and board to promote the standards with hospital administrators and change the culture of perioperative nurses and even get to the level of having our standards embedded within the National Quality standards. A cocktail party followed where networking with other Perioperative leaders commenced and not knowing anyone, it was an opportunity for me to start making contact with other leaders from all over Australia.

The following day, Friday, we had presentations from some amazing Nurse leaders such as Deborah Picone, CEO, ACSQHC and Wendy Wood, Assessor ACSQHC who were entertaining and highlighted the importance of the Australian safety standards and the role they played in reducing incidents. They both spoke about leadership and how important valuable leaders throughout the healthcare system can be. A statement made by Wendy which I took away from this session is "Leaders are defined by their followers and there is no follow ship without trust" and she also talked about inspiring, motivating and mentoring without having to use your authority; this is a good leader. We all need more than one mentor which I found interesting and have taken this back to pass on to others. Debbie was very entertaining even though her presentation was displayed by a fire drill while live through a teleconference.

Amanda Adrian was another presenter on this day which was of great interest to me considering the recycling program we run at Concord Hospital for the past 10 years. Amanda talked about climate change and the correlation with healthcare and what it means to us. As Perioperative Nurses we need to take the lead on doing as much as we can to reduce our carbon emissions and waste generated. Amanda talked about many organisations throughout Australia and globally we can tap into to get information or advice.

Kylie Ward was a dynamic speaker as CEO of Australian College of Nurses who spoke on cultivating world class perioperative leaders and the projection of 2030 with a serious workforce shortage of Nurses. She spoke of the technical impact of the future and if we don't get enough nurses, we could

be replaced with technicians and how we need to forward think of how we can avoid this happening and make sure we let our leaders know what we need in theatres which are certainly not technicians. Kylie also talked about having a few mentors and that we all should have one under 30yrs old, a millennial, to advise us on the social media aspects of communicating with staff and using evolving technology in the future.

Darlene Cox and Karen Hay then spoke to us about mental health amongst our staff and how we can support them and how to identify the various levels and when to step in as a leader to help. Compassionate and empathetic leadership was discussed as well. The dinner was held in the East Hotel in the restaurant and the food was a delicious Italian banquet with many trade company reps joining each table to network.

The last day of the conference was fantastic and I felt privileged to be at this leadership conference as many of the perioperative leaders I had seen and followed over the years were all in the one room together. Paula Foran, Phyllis Davis, Ruth Melville and Jed Duff to name a few, spoke about their own journeys throughout their perioperative Nursing careers, they all inspired me towards being a better leader and I was in awe of all of them. The person in the highlight of the whole conference was Sally Sutherland Fraser who did an amazing job of facilitating every session. The facilitation method used for this summit was fantastic and Sally was the best person to have in this role. She is a mentor for me and has been for 10 years and always asks appropriate questions to get everyone involved and promote interesting discussions from the delegates.

I would like to thank NSW OTA for contributing towards my attendance at the ACORN leadership conference and I encourage others to go to the next one which is also biannual alternating with the ACORN conference. This was the inaugural leadership summit and it seemed from the delegates' enthusiasm that there will definitely be another one organised for 2021. I think it's an excellent idea for such a leadership conference and it was also great to see various types of nurses attend, not just managers.

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11/10/2019