ACORN

The Australian College of Perioperative Nurses (ACORN) is a registered
Australian company and health
promotion charity. It exists to serve its
members, the perioperative profession,
the patient and the community to
promote the prevention and control of
disease.

ACORN’s vision is for Australian patients
to receive the safest and highest quality
evidence-based perioperative care in
the world.

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Ralph: The value of a perioperative nurse

The young woman – a first-time
‘flyer’ – shook with fear at the
thought of being poked and prodded
by strange people, being put to sleep
by strange drugs and being cut with
a cold steel knife in an attempt to
treat her condition. I watched her
passively, being told not to move as
the observer in the room. I drank
it all in – the glint of the surgical
instruments neatly laid out on the
table, the hum of the warming device,
the soft beep of the machines.
Suddenly a masked stranger
appeared beside the girl with barely
a word. The girl winced as a cannula
was driven into her vein. As I watched
I could see the story on her face. It
said simply, ‘I’m afraid’.

Someone else also saw this fear
on her face. Out of the corner of
the theatre, they sidled up to the
young woman whose knuckles
were white from clinging to the
bed rails. The person introduced
themselves, talking to the young
woman in a friendly and comforting
yet professional manner. They jovially
but kindly introduced the team and
spoke to the young woman about
what would happen and who was
there to care for her. I remember
seeing the rapport building between
the two of them like the flames of a
warming fire and the calm, soothing
voice filled with reassurance like
the captain of an aircraft during
turbulence. The meaning behind
the words was clear – the theatre
team were thoroughly prepared
and equipped with expertise and
knowledge. The fear on the young
woman’s face began to wash away as
this person made a promise to her,
‘I won’t leave you while you’re asleep,
OK? I’ll be with you and watching
over you until you wake up’. In less
than two minutes, without drugs or a
device being used, the young woman
was transformed from a trembling
mess into a calm and collected soul.

I was impressed beyond words
and filled with questions. Who was
this person? Where did they learn
to do this? What sort of health
professional are they? This was my
first introduction to a perioperative
nurse. Someone who made a
profound impact during one of
the most vulnerable periods of a
person’s life\textsuperscript{12,13}.

In today’s perioperative environment,
‘throughput’ is so often emphasised
ahead of thorough care\textsuperscript{14–16}. My fear is
that the meaning and function of the
nursing role will be forgotten amidst
efficiency drives and the constant
push to do more with less\textsuperscript{17}. Yet the
problem of long elective surgery
waiting lists will not be solved by
skimping on five minutes spent
reassuring a patient. Perioperative
nursing’s brand must therefore be
centred firmly on the value it fulfils
in providing comprehensive care to
people when they are at their most
vulnerable. In the words of a famous
report in the failings of hospital

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Editorial

The value of a perioperative nurse

I was not drawn to perioperative
nursing because of a love of
surgery\textsuperscript{1–4} (though this was something
I had, and still have). And it wasn’t
a love of the changing nature of the
environment\textsuperscript{5–8} (even though this too
was a factor) or the sheer spectacle
of the perioperative environment\textsuperscript{9–11}
(although I did find it alluring). It
was, in fact, because of a situation I
witnessed years ago when a terrified
young woman faced the prospect of
surrendering her dignity, her control
and her self to the surgical team.

The young woman – who had just
been informed she was going to
undergo a surgical procedure
– was driven into her vein. As I watched
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vulnerable. In the words of a famous
report in the failings of hospital
care, our emphasis should always be ‘patients … not numbers, people … not statistics’\textsuperscript{10}. When we follow this precept, we create our own value and establish the nature by which we make a difference to the health of so many Australians.

**Editor’s note**

Since taking over in late 2017 as editor of this journal, I have been privileged to work with a terrific and dedicated team of people at the Australian College of Perioperative Nurses. A recent career opportunity has led to my decision to step aside as Journal Editor of *Journal of Perioperative Nursing* (JPN)\textsuperscript{14–20}. I wish to convey my sincere thanks to ACORN President, Rebecca East, for her continued support and leadership; to Patricia Flood, chair of the Journal Committee, for her dedication to the journal’s progress, and to the wonderful Eleanor Tan for being an utterly brilliant and thoroughly reliable copy editor. I also wish to express thanks to ACORN past-president, Sarah Bird, for giving me the chance to step into the role and to the previous chair of the Journal Committee, Grace Loh, for her advocacy. I also want to thank people such as Associate Professor Jed Duff, Professor Brigid Gillespie, Dr Lois Hamlin and Associate Professor Pat Nicholson for their wise counsel at key steps in the journal’s progress. Our reviewers also deserve thanks as they are now more engaged, skilled and active in improving the quality of submitted articles. Lastly, but by no means least, I wish to thank all the readers who have commented on their continued and growing enjoyment of the journal.

In two years, we have come so far. We are now online, open access and moving fast up the rankings. Last year, we were cited more than at any time in our history and we saw the highest number of submissions to date. We now have a worldwide audience and our rebranding as *Journal of Perioperative Nursing* reflects ACORN’s growing position as a global influencer in perioperative leadership and practice. The journal’s role in continuing to advance the evidence base for perioperative nursing is crucial. I will always treasure the opportunity I have had to be a part of the journal. It has been an honour to contribute to the evidence that guides those who make an impact every day – perioperative nurses.

**References**