

October 2007 Newsletter

If I Were a Young Nurse

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"If I were a young nurse, I would be a traveler." This was a recurring thought until a postcard caught my attention advertising the need for interim perioperative directors throughout the United States. "I can do this," I thought. With my extensive perioperative management experience, my dream of being a traveling nurse soon materialized.

Traveling to various parts of the country can be adventurous and fun. Customarily, interim directors are flown home twice a month. On the weekends spent during the assignment, one can explore the local customs and points of interest. This is a luxury that most of us reserve for retirement but can enjoy as a traveler.

There are many rewards for the interim professional and for the healthcare organization. The director develops rapport quickly as credibility is established. Although people are different, their issues are similar to their counterparts throughout the country.

When a new director joins an organization, people are eager to tell their stories and to work toward solutions to their concerns. The best tactic is to ask a lot of questions and to listen to the answers. When information is forthcoming, assumptions can be made, and plans can be formulated enlisting buy-in from the physicians and staff.

In my personal practice, the most gratifying experience is hearing, "Thanks for helping us. You made a difference." When people, from switchboard operators to the CFO, started asking me if I was going to (please) stay as a permanent director, I knew I was making the positive difference that I had intended. The staff needs a leader who not only maintains standards and holds people accountable, but they deserve a leader who cares about them individually.

Finally, if you do find that organization that entices you, there is the option of becoming a permanent member of the leadership staff. That's what happened to me in Northern California. I am the director of a small, two-hospital system where we are working on several exciting projects. We recently started a total joint program that has decreased the length of stay by 50%, and we are planning an open heart program. We are building a new suite and training new staff for this exciting venture. I want to finish what I have started.

The announcement of my staying was sent out yesterday by the CNO, and the positive feedback and congratulations is overwhelming. I know that this is what I was meant to do.