

Compassion ran deeply then, and it still does

Submitted by Heather White, RN

When Carteret Health Care originally opened their doors over 50 years ago, it was called Carteret General Hospital. Over the years, there have been many changes to the building, the contents, and our staffing. The heart of healthcare in Carteret County remains the same. Compassion ran deeply then, and it still does.



When I was a little girl, I visited Carteret General Hospital to see my grandfather who was suffering with cancer. I still remember the nurses who looked like these. When I first came to Carteret General Hospital as a Surgical Technician in 1993, I had the pleasure of working with Annie Ruth. She was a Surgical Technician who helped move the hospital from the Morehead City waterfront to its current location in 1967. She had many stories to tell and I wish I had written them all down. I remember when she started working, the operating room personnel washed and sterilized gloves and sponges, to be reused. General surgeons delivered babies and repaired fractures. One of her duties was to hold up the x-ray film so fractures could be viewed during the cases. Times have changed as today, we would never reuse sponges or gloves and babies have their own specialty doctors as well as current technology allows us to view radiological films safely, without radiation exposure.

In 1993 the hospital opened a brand new Operating Room. Plans were being developed to upgrade the Emergency Department and build the Brady Birthing Center. In the center picture below, Dr. Leon Morrison, OBGYN (far left) poses with the OR staff in the lounge just before the move into the new facility.

When I joined the team, joint replacements were being performed by orthopedists Drs. Moore and Zettle (middle- left picture). They were integrating new equipment and techniques to rapidly improve outcomes for degenerative joint disease. Ron Oat was an Orthopedic Nurse Specialist (right- left picture), Jeri Osborne (left- left picture) Certified Surgical Technician were members of our Orthopedic Team.



Julie Alvarez (above) came to us from California this year, and has become a ray of sunshine to our staff and patients. The top right picture includes additional members of our Orthopedic Team, including Karen Gurney, Jonathan Penland, and Patty Riehl (left to right).

Through the cooperation of the Surgical Services Department and the Third North Surgical Department we were able to develop a Center of Excellence which is known as our Joint and Spine Center. Currently, the Joint and Spine Center has eight surgeons. In 2012 we added robotic surgery, which increased precision of joint replacement, reduced hospital length of stays and allowed our patients return to their activities faster.

Healthcare was changing rapidly. Our general surgeons began to perform Laparoscopic (minimally invasive) surgeries. Drs. Michael Bell and Brady Way soon began bariatric procedures and currently Drs. Ted Johnson and Juozas Zavadzkas lead the charge with our Bariatric Center of Excellence. Our staff are trained in specialized care of morbidly obese patients.

At night and on weekends our staff are prepared to care for patients with various emergencies. Our physicians repair fractures, provide Caesarean Sections and perform appendectomies all in the same shift. Our team is well versed in all aspects of emergency surgeries.



Sometimes a baby cannot wait to be born while we are caring for others. Recognizing the need for speed, the OR staff and Maternal Child Health staff cross trained labor and delivery nurses to work with us in our new Cesarean Section suite. MCH nurses are trained to provide Post Anesthesia Care for mothers receiving Cesarean sections.

As the torch passes from one member to the next, the legacy of excellent care continues. Carteret General Hospital has changed employees, management, decor, phone numbers, and even the name, however consistent caring for others remains constant. Our persistent drive to make surgery safer, more efficient, less costly and easier for our patients and families has not changed. At Carteret Health Care, the compassion flowed then, and it lives on now.