

# OR Nursing at UNC

## It's a Different Dynamic in the Operating Room



**Jennifer Johnson, RN**  
Charge Nurse  
Children's Operating Room  
UNC Hospitals

He had been a young sailor serving in the Pacific during World War II. Now the enemy was Alzheimer's and he was spending the last nights of his life reliving those wartime experiences. She was a young nurse in her first job, sharing many of those

nights with him, often holding his hand and always bringing comfort to him and his family, and she has never forgotten.

For UNC Hospitals RN Jennifer Johnson, that memory is just one of many stretching over her nursing career. A career focused on relationships; between nurses and patients, nurses and patient's families, nurses and doctors, nurses and other colleagues. A career that almost didn't happen, Johnson grew up in the Canadian Maritime province of New Brunswick, not very far from Prince Edward Island, home of Lucy Maud Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables*. Surrounded by marshland, river and ocean, Johnson expected a career somehow involved with water and entered college to study Marine Biology.

Her vocational plans took an unexpected turn while at school after her brother was involved in a motorcycle accident. Watching the quality of care he received during his three-month recovery sparked an interest in nursing for Johnson, and she entered A.J. McMasters School of Nursing in her Canadian hometown of Moncton shortly thereafter.

After finishing her course of study at McMasters, she then worked at a hospital in Maine until hearing of the opportunities offered by UNC Hospitals and the Triangle area. She was especially attracted to UNC because of the hospital's reputation for offering excellent on-the-job training opportunities for nurses and other medical professionals. "They're very understanding and patient with you," she said.

Johnson began her career on a hematology/oncology unit, but later switched to the operating room. She was intrigued by the different dynamic in the operating room setting: "You get an enhanced rapport with the doctors. You have one-on-one time with the patients, instead of dealing with six at once."

She also takes great pleasure in watching her colleagues develop their skills during the time they serve together. "In the operating room, you see how the residents, new doctors and nurses grow and improve their skills and how it affects patient care; it's amazing how much someone can grow in a six month period," she said.

While television may tend to exaggerate the reality of hospital life and the operating room in particular, she says anyone considering nursing will find plenty of challenge. Although not a big TV fan, "When I do flip the channels and see stuff...it doesn't seem real to me." Johnson remarked. Unlike the often relaxed and casual atmosphere on the TV shows, "Sometimes it can be so fast paced you just have to go and go," she said.

"It's a great profession for young people," she said. "There are so many areas into which you can expand, even teaching nursing." Johnson has enjoyed serving in three different areas in her career, including geriatric nursing, hematology/oncology, and the operating room. Johnson is currently serving as the charge nurse in the Women's and Children's operating room. There, she spends most of her day orchestrating the flow of patients, personnel, and materials among the different departments involved in the surgical operation.

Johnson has seen many positive outcomes as new technology is implemented at UNC Hospitals. "It's changing the pain management protocols and post operative recovery times for the patients," she said. "The time in surgery is already becoming shorter."

Johnson is proud of UNC Hospitals and the people she works with, especially the nurses, and enjoys the teamwork of the operating room. Her focus is always the patient. As a nurse, she says, "You often have to speak up...you're the voice of the patient."

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We Believe in the **POWER** of Nursing.

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**W**elcome to the University of North Carolina Hospitals Surgical Services Division! This

area includes perioperative, procedural and hospital support departments. We provide a comprehensive approach to our patients and their families throughout their stay with us.

The perioperative units are found in three sites. The main site is located in N.C. Memorial Hospital and includes 24 operating rooms as well as both Pre- and Post-operative areas. The site that services the N.C. Women's and Children's hospitals is located in the N.C. Children's Hospital and includes 8 operating rooms and Pre- and Post-operative areas. The third perioperative site is located in the Ambulatory Care Center and is comprised of 4 operating rooms and Pre- and Post-operative areas.

The procedural units for Surgical Services include the Adult GI Endoscopy and both the motility units located in Memorial Hospital and the Meadowmont Center, and Pediatric GI and Pulmonary Endoscopy located in the Children's Hospital. Additionally, the Cystoscopy and Urophysiology units are located in the Urology Clinic in N.C. Memorial Hospital and the GYN clinic in the N.C. Women's Hospital.

Other Perioperative Support departments include Pre-Care, a preoperative patient assessment unit; Perfusion, which encompasses cardioperfusion and cell-saver capabilities; the Central Processing Department that is responsible for instrument and supply maintenance; Anesthesia Support; and our Business Office.

UNC Hospitals is on the cutting edge of technology for a number of surgical procedures, including the use of the DaVinci Robot. Our specialty services include cochlear implants, abdominal transplants, bariatric procedures and pediatric open-heart surgeries. There are over 20,000 cases done in our surgical ORs and 10,000 cases done in the procedural suites. Our outstanding team members provide care to the patients, many of whom are critically ill, with skill, efficiency, and compassion. It is, indeed, exciting state of the art Surgical Services.

### EDUCATION

Registered nurses must graduate from a state-approved school of nursing and pass a national licensing exam. Entry-level nurses may earn bachelor's degrees, offered by four-year colleges and universities; two-year associate degrees that are offered by community colleges; or diplomas that are offered by hospital-based programs.

### SKILLS REQUIRED

A strong background in mathematics and science, critical thinking, problem solving and leadership skills, resource management, strong interpersonal and communication skills, and flexibility.

### RECOMMENDED HIGH SCHOOL CLASSES

- **Math** (three courses – algebra I, algebra II, and geometry or a higher level math course)
- **Science** (three courses – one biological science, one physical science and one lab course)
- **English** (four units)
- **Social Studies** (two units)
- **Foreign Language** (two years, Spanish preferred)

### FINANCIAL AID

North Carolina has two state-funded financial assistance programs, especially for nursing students.

One is the **Nurse Scholars Program**, which is a scholarship-based grant program and the other is the **Nurse Education Scholarship Loan Program**, which is based on financial need. To learn more, visit the N.C. State Education Assistance Authority web site ([www.ncseaa.edu](http://www.ncseaa.edu)) and click on nursing.

### UNC-CHAPEL HILL SCHOOL OF NURSING

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Nursing is a state-approved school of nursing and has been the leader in nursing education in North Carolina throughout its history. Established in 1950, the School is renowned for its academic programs, its research and commitment to clinical and community service within state, national and global communities. Programs include:

- Traditional **Bachelor of Science (BS)** in nursing
- **Accelerated BS** in nursing option for individuals who already hold baccalaureate degrees in non-nursing fields



- **RN-BSN** option for associate degree and diploma program graduates
- **Carolina Online:** RN to BSN option offered totally online
- **RN-Masters of Science in Nursing (MSN)**
- **MSN** degree in a variety of advanced practice nursing and health care systems specialties
- **Post-MSN** options in advanced practice specialties
- **PhD** program in nursing science
- **Pre- and post-doctoral fellowships**

### RANKINGS

- **One of the Top 5 Universities** in NIH Annual Research Funding
- **One of the Top 5 Graduate Nursing Programs** *U.S. News & World Report*
- **97% NCLEX Passing Rate** for 152 Students Writing NCLEX for the First Time

### FROM NURSING SCHOOL TO NURSING CAREER

#### Perioperative Nursing Residency Program

Encompassing a range of surgery specialties, this unique residency program at UNC Hospitals prepares you for the role of caring for patients of all ages who are undergoing surgical intervention. Unlike other residencies that support primarily new nurse graduates, the perioperative residency is geared to new nurses as well as experienced nurses who are pursuing OR nursing for the first time.

#### From Classroom to Clinical Practice

Your six-month residency begins with **three weeks of in-depth classroom training** from expert instructors who love to teach perioperative nursing.

A **preceptorship** follows, in which you'll develop and apply advanced nursing skills in the clinical setting and receive one-on-one support from a skilled perioperative nurse preceptor. This individual will help you set goals and evaluate your progress.

**Weekly "debriefing" sessions** with your peers and instructors provide additional encouragement and support in a relaxed, friendly atmosphere.

Once your perioperative residency is complete, you may decide to **join a specialty team**. If so, you'll receive **four to eight weeks of additional precepting** in that area.

Whatever you decide, your residency at UNC Hospitals will help prepare you for obtaining your **CNOR certification**. When your residency is complete, you'll join your peers and instructors in a **special event**, celebrating your completion of the program.

**Continuing education** is offered through UNC with tuition reimbursement for furthering your degree. "**Carolina Nursing**" involves an innovative partnership between UNC-CH School of Nursing and UNC Hospitals, enriching the education practice environment. UNC Nurses are well on their way to achieving Magnet designation. The Nursing Education department offers a wide variety of classes to help you achieve your fullest potential.

### FINANCIAL AID FOR SENIOR NURSING STUDENTS

UNC School of Nursing also offers a **Graduating Senior Loan Forgiveness Program** for Senior nursing students. A tiered program is awarded to the earliest qualifying candidates. This program provides loans forgiven through work commitment (you choose the level of commitment and funding). Call for details on how to apply!

Visit [www.unc.edu/dept/nursing](http://www.unc.edu/dept/nursing) or call **919-966-4260**. UNC-Chapel Hill School of Nursing, Office of Admissions, CB 7460, Carrington Hall, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-7460.