

MICHELLE SPARKS, RPN

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Michelle Sparks



Michelle Sparks is a RPN who currently works at Holland Orthopaedic and Arthritis Centre at Sunnybrook Hospital as an operating room nurse. Michelle has been a RPN for 11 years and has always worked in the operating room setting.

Prior to becoming a nurse, Michelle worked in retail and industry, where she gained experience through different roles that evolved from a front line worker to manager. Realizing the value of post-secondary education, her career path led her to nursing.

Michelle entered the Loyalist College Practical Nursing Program in 1997 but as a student she realized early in her education that bedside nursing may not be the right career path for her. However, Michelle was determined to finish the PN Certificate course, as her post-secondary education would provide her with transferrable knowledge and skills. Michelle knew that the knowledge and organizational skills she acquired would be valuable to her even if she chose not to work in the nursing profession.

Fortunately for Michelle, as a student she had the opportunity to observe in the Operating Rooms where, much to her surprise, she was sure she found her true calling. The first surgery she observed was a total knee replacement. Following this, the surgeon allowed her to scrub in with the team on the next surgery which was a total hip replacement. The equipment looked positively barbaric but Michelle always loved saws and drills and was familiar with handling tools to her father since she was about three years old. Instinctively she had developed a knack of knowing what was needed next, even before it was asked for. Michelle said “the surgeon demonstrated how to rotate the leg/hip joint in and out of place during the procedure. From then on I was “in charge” of the leg and it’s repeated dislocations. His encouragement that I was a natural cemented my decision that I must work in the OR and I eagerly looked for the requirements to meet this goal.”

At that moment Michelle realized where her career path was leading her. She had found a passion in nursing that would allow her to use her skills to the fullest. Her plan now was to complete the PN Certificate Program and enrol in an OR course. Her determination to become an OR nurse did not waver over the next few years, even though she had several “twists in life”. While Michelle worked through all four years of college to support her education, she had not anticipated having a son and two more job changes before she completed her program, but by 2001 she had successfully completed her PN and OR Certificates. One of the most important aspects of Michelle’s education was learning assessment skills, and she maintains that this has proven to be her most invaluable knowledge, even to this day.

When she graduated in 2001 she started working in the OR and has never looked back. Michelle says that in “no other place in the hospital do the nurses outnumber the patients. It can be one of the most critical times in a patient’s life when they have to visit the OR and certainly when it is for a total joint replacement. I am proud to provide excellent care during this crucial point in our patients lives.”

Michelle is actively involved in professional practice of nursing and is the co-chair of Holland Center Nursing Council and President-elect for RPNAO Operating Room Speciality Group (OR SIG)

“I feel as an RPN I can make a difference in the healthcare system as a nurse that always strives to work to their full potential every day and being the best nurse I can be, never resting in the pursuit of lifelong learning and working at a full scope of practice.” - Michelle Sparks