March 2016

NURSE ANESTHETISTS HIGHLIGHTED

About 150 people gathered to celebrate VUMC’s history of anesthesia and nurse anesthetists at a special reception and program in Light Hall on Jan. 27. The event was part of Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA) week, celebrating the accomplishments of more than 150 CRNAs at VUMC.

The ambitious program covered the period from 1875 (when anesthesia became widely used) to the present and featured more than a dozen speakers, representing former and current faculty and staff in the Department of Anesthesiology. Much of the history was told through personal stories during various eras.

“As you hear these stories… you certainly get a deep appreciation for the culture that Vanderbilt Anesthesia is and has become because of those who made it what it is today,” said Brent Dunworth, MSN, MBA, CRNA, associate director for Anesthesia Advanced Practice and chief CRNA.

Michael Leersnyder, MSN, CRNA, educator, kicked off the historical overview that started with the opening of Vanderbilt’s first hospital at Fifth Avenue and Elm Street, near downtown Nashville. Vanderbilt’s early history of innovation includes the Gwathmey &

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Woolsey Apparatus, co-invented by James Gwathmey, MD, who graduated from Vanderbilt in 1899. The vapor inhaler was an early means of administering anesthesia.

Vanderbilt’s use of anesthesia gained momentum after the 1925 opening of the new Vanderbilt University School of Medicine in what is now Medical Center North. Irene Kellogg became the first nurse who administered anesthesia at VUMC, during the era of Barney Brooks, Chief of Surgery from 1925 to 1951. When Kellogg retired in 1964, Joyce Cantrell was hired as the first certified registered nurse anesthetist at Vanderbilt.

Originally, the hospital had only four large and two small operating rooms, located on the fourth floor of Medical Center North. The work of surgical staff was partly illuminated by waist-to-ceiling windows, and doctors could view downtown Nashville as they performed surgery.

During that time, Sharon Baskette was hired as an anesthesia technician when there were only two others on staff.

Thirty-nine years later, she’s just beginning her retirement from Vanderbilt.

“We love what we do,” she said. “We have a passion for it.”

The program included recollections from former chairs of the Department of Anesthesiology — Bradley Smith, MD; Jeff Balser, MD, PhD, currently vice chancellor for Health Affairs; and Warren Sandberg, current chair of the department.

“I salute you and you have my deepest respect and my deepest gratitude,” Sandberg told the audience.

Vanderbilt’s growth accelerated with the opening of the current Vanderbilt University Hospital in 1980. The new hospital had 19 state-of-the-art ORs.

Vanderbilt now has 61 adult and 19 pediatric ORs.

Several CRNAs were part of the January presentation.

“From my personal journey here at Vanderbilt for 20 years, there has been one common thread that has kept me here year after year — there was always that feeling of family,” said Edith Newberry, BNS, MS, CRNA. “We’ve laughed and we’ve cried. We’ve endured and we’ve really, really grown, but we’re still family.”

The number of CRNAs at Vanderbilt grew as surgical volume grew, from one in 1964 to 140 today.

“The future is particularly bright,” Dunworth said. “We have so much talent, and so much commitment.”

“The caliber of the Vanderbilt CRNAs is extraordinary,” added Marilyn Dubree, MSN, RN, NE-BC, Executive Chief Nursing Officer.
The number of certified nurses at Vanderbilt University Medical Center continues to grow.

Certification is the formal recognition of specialized knowledge, skills and experience demonstrated by the achievement of standards identified by a nursing specialty to promote optimal health outcomes. After meeting defined eligibility criteria, a certification candidate achieves a nationally recognized credential through successful completion of a rigorous examination.

Obtaining a certification has benefits for nurses, for the institution and for better patient care. For nurses, the recognition of their professional development makes them stand out as leaders.

“It validates their skills, their knowledge and their professionalism, which builds confidence, which will flow over into patient care,” said Lesa Cole, MSN, RN-BC, director of Clinical Education and Professional Development for Vanderbilt University Adult Hospital and Clinics.

Chris Wilson, MSN, RN-BC, director of Nursing Education & Professional Development for VUMC, said, “one of the nice things about certification is that once you’ve earned it, it’s yours and it goes with you whatever new role you might take on.”

She added, “When I’m reviewing candidates for open positions, if I see that they are certified in our clinical specialty, it gets my attention right away.”

Nurses who have obtained certifications are the best spokespeople for the importance of certifications, remarked Marissa Lemley Brown, MSN, RN, CPN, director of Clinical Education for Monroe Carell Jr. Children’s Hospital at Vanderbilt. Certified nurses are empowered by their knowledge and are able to teach their skills to others. “They can speak to how important it is to be a certified nurse,” she said.

Wilson noted that the certification is a source of pride, because it doesn’t come easily. Depending on the certification, the requirements can include a certain number of hours of nursing practice in a particular specialty, along with continuing education credits. Lastly, there is an exam. Much of it asks nurses to weigh in on real-world scenarios.

“You have to be able to apply knowledge,” Wilson said.

Vanderbilt eliminates a major barrier to certification by participating in programs that can pay for the cost of a nursing certification up front –
costs that can range from $250 to $450. The details of the program depend on the certification being sought.

Higher nursing certification numbers raise the prestige of Vanderbilt, and nursing leadership is encouraging it in many ways. Managers and directors are leading by example by obtaining certifications, and by allowing flexible schedules to enable nurses to study and take exams. Study groups have also formed, to allow peer-to-peer conversation.

“I think the buy-in and the support of the leaders has been pivotal,” Wilson said.

Once a nurse obtains a certification, it allows them to join a national peer group of certified nurses, and national Internet message boards allow for conversation.

Better-trained nurses mean better patient care throughout Vanderbilt, the ultimate goal.

The Nurse Residency Program helps new nurses transition from nursing school to professional practice through hands-on clinical experience, interactive education sessions and the guidance of staff.

Meet the Winter 2016 cohort:

479 Inquiries
328 Applications
275 Interviews
128 Nurse Residents

Behavioral Health: 4
Burn: 5
Adult ED: 12
Women’s Health: 3
CVICU: 4
SICU: 7
MICU: 6
Neuro ICU: 5
Trauma: 3
Acute Medicine: 27
Acute Surgery: 12

Acute Progressive: 19
Pediatric ICU: 2
Pediatric CICU: 2
Pediatric PACU/HR: 2
Pediatric Acute & Specialty: 6
Pediatric NICU/Newborn: 6
Pediatric ED: 3

61 Nursing Programs
28 States + Canada

APRILFEST 2016
CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Aprilfest 2016 is a four-day educational event for VUMC licensed and non-licensed care providers, including nurses and care partners, to be held from April 26 to April 28. This year’s theme is “Healthcare Branching Out Globally.”

All the sessions are free, but registration is required. Contact hours are offered depending on the course. The event is sponsored by VUMC’s Department of Nursing Education and Professional Development.

Click here to see this year’s schedule.