

GUEST EDITORIAL

GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER

Have you ever wondered when we begin to notice our differences more than our similarities? Are we born noticing (and often despising) differences in color, religion, or nationality, or is that something that we learn? If this is a learned behavior, can it be “unlearned,” and can it be “unlearned” by adults with what may be years of ingrained beliefs and experiences? Can we teach our children to “do as I say, and not as I do?” Can we manage to admit and overcome our own prejudices and set an example to our children by embracing, and not abhorring our differences?

With the terror threats rising and the likelihood of another Gulf war looming, I was struck by a comment from my daughter. It was safety week at her school and Lauren had come home with her assignment: make an escape plan to get out of the house in case of a fire. The odd thing was that this assignment was made on the day that the terror alert was elevated here in the US and a terrorist attack seemed imminent either here or abroad. After getting home from buying duct tape and plastic (9 year-olds take all “disaster planning” instructions very seriously), we sat down to have dinner and watch the evening news. As is often the case, there across the screen were numerous men, women, and children espousing their hatred of the United States. Lauren’s only comment was: “If we really got to know each other, I bet that we could have fun. After all, we’re really not that bad and neither are they.” Out of the mouth of babes always comes true wisdom!

Have you ever found that to be true? If you just get to know someone, or visit a different region, or another country, don’t you find that the closer that you get, the more alike that we seem? From a human perspective, we all have basic needs that must be met. We all want to live in safe communities. And we all want a good education for our children. From a nursing perspective, we all want to provide the best care available to our patients, and do that in a safe environment with adequate equipment, staffing, and safe working conditions. And from a perianesthesia perspective, our needs and our problems also tend to have a similar theme, irregardless of what country that we practice in.

I am honored to contribute this guest editorial to the *British Journal of Anaesthetic and Recovery Nursing*. It has been my pleasure to get to know your editor, Melanie Oakley, over the email channels over the last few months. We have learned, just from email correspondence, that we have so much in common, as editors and as perianesthesia nurses. As editors of specialty journals for our respective national specialty organizations, we both worry if we will have enough articles to fill a journal issue, if those articles will be of high quality, and if we, as editors, will be able to write an editorial that is meaningful and of interest to our readers! As perianesthesia nurses, I think that Melanie says it the best: “we are all nurses working in similar environments, working towards a common goal – excellence in perianesthetic practice.”¹

Wouldn’t it be nice if we could all, in every nation, work towards a common goal, if we could look for commonalities, instead of fighting over differences? And what if we could accept differences as something that makes us unique and special, and worthy of appreciation? I think that our countries, and the world would be a different place! It starts with each individual, in your own workplace and community. I know perianesthesia nurses who will say “Well, if those floor (or OR, or ICU...you can fill in the blank) nurses would get their act together, this would not be a problem.” Are you ever guilty of such thoughts or statements? If so, it needs to stop. The quality of patient care will only improve if we stop trying to pass the blame and work together towards a common solution. Communities will never grow and prosper if we continue to use our differences as an excuse for not working together. A better world begins with each individual making an effort. If we all make the effort, surely one day, we will succeed. As Lauren says: “If we really got to know each other, I bet that we could have fun!”

References:

1. Oakley M: [2003] Reflections from the United Kingdom. *J. Peri Anesth Nurs*, 18, (2).

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