

# Inspirations for a career

A nursing student shares how a positive clinical experience sparked her enthusiasm for the profession. BY AMIE MCKAY

Whenever I begin a new clinical placement, I'm always a bit nervous about what I will find. Will the RNs be welcoming? Or will they feel burdened by my questions? Last fall, I was especially anxious when I started a placement on the cardiology unit at St. Mary's Hospital in Kitchener. I was going to a specialized floor, and I worried about how I would learn things right away.

So I was grateful when I met my preceptor, Anita Cressman. She made me feel welcome and introduced me to everyone on the team within my first two shifts. She made sure I was part of every different aspect of cardiac nursing. She also helped me learn new skills, especially telemetry. She sat with me during every shift and showed me how to identify normal arrhythmias and determine how they may be related to patients' diagnoses or symptoms. Because rhythms are very important in cardiology, I wanted to make sure I understood them. My preceptor reviewed them with me until I became more independent with my knowledge. As my confidence grew, I began to read the telemetry reports myself, but I could always ask my preceptor if I had any questions. Today, cardiology is my new passion.

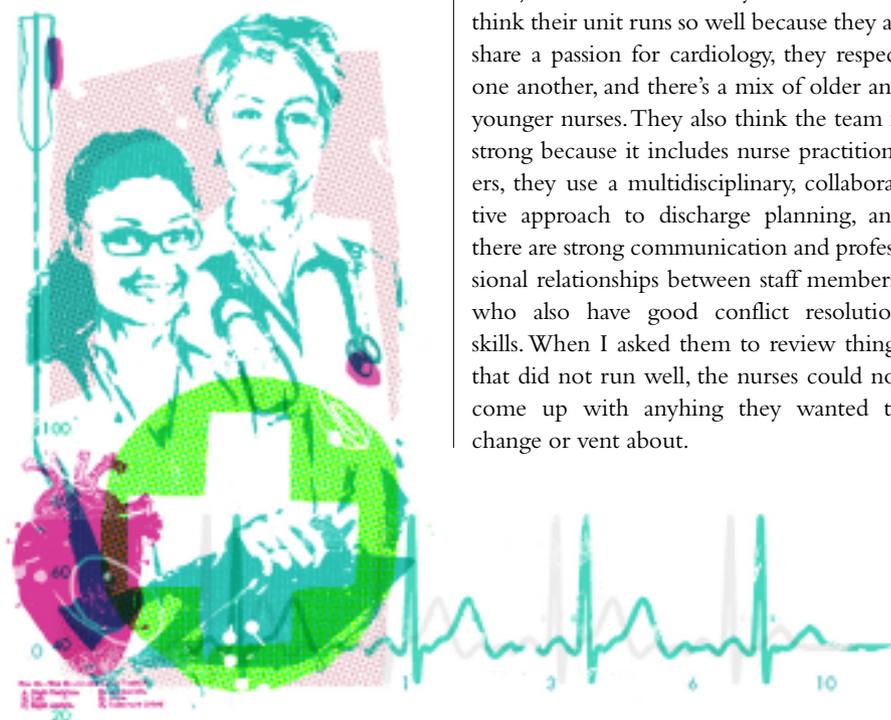
The supportive and positive work environment I was part of on the unit was a nice surprise. During my four years in the Conestoga College-McMaster University nursing program, most of my placement experiences have been in medicine, surgical, and psychiatric areas. Sometimes, I have seen nurses burned out by heavy workloads show a lack of compassion toward students. Students can feel the negativity coming from nurses. I have even overheard RNs say "oh, students again ... they really can't do much of anything." All those negative attitudes really contribute to students' perceptions of the profession. But my experience on St. Mary's cardiology unit got me excited to start my career. Now, I want to be part of the organization and to learn more

about cardiology. I have never been on a unit that has affected me this much. I hope my experiences will give hope to other nursing students. There are compassionate, knowledgeable, welcoming RNs out there who will create positive learning experiences for students.

The nurses on the unit demonstrated all the elements of a healthy work environ-

me read the ECG and call the physician. Afterwards, we talked about the medications the woman was taking, and how they would affect her condition.

After being on the unit for a few weeks, I started to wonder how the staff members felt about their team. I created a confidential survey asking for the nurses' opinions on job satisfaction. Fourteen participants (all RNs) were included. They told me they think their unit runs so well because they all share a passion for cardiology, they respect one another, and there's a mix of older and younger nurses. They also think the team is strong because it includes nurse practitioners, they use a multidisciplinary, collaborative approach to discharge planning, and there are strong communication and professional relationships between staff members, who also have good conflict resolution skills. When I asked them to review things that did not run well, the nurses could not come up with anything they wanted to change or vent about.



ment that I've learned and read about in class. They have healthy, positive inter-colaborative practice, open communication with fellow team members, patients and students, shared decision making and goal setting, and the entire team has a strong knowledge base.

I always felt like a part of the team and a welcomed novice. The nurses wanted me there, and I could ask them anything. Even during the shifts when my preceptor wasn't working, I could always turn to another RN if I had a question. The first time one of my patients had chest pain, another RN jumped to my side right away. She helped

I hope my story will show that students can have positive experiences that allow them to develop professional relationships, and become passionate about nursing. I still have one last placement left to complete before graduation this spring, and I can only hope that the qualities I have learned from the nurses at St. Mary's can be instilled and embraced wherever I work as a student or new grad. **RN**

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