

world to becoming more technology-savvy. Was it difficult? "It was a learning curve," she said. It took longer than she would have liked, but she adjusted and actually admitted to missing it when it was once not available. Healy said that the transition to a more technology-driven workplace is actually beneficial in adding some extra safety steps for the nurses. For example, they now have an additional safety-feature of bedside medication verification, where they scan the patient's wristband, verifying the person and that their medication is given to them properly.

Both Healy and Mains agree that much of the shift in nursing procedures comes from evidence-based practice. Mains states, "The different diagnostics and procedures that we do today and our treatment of different disease entities (such as) heart disease and diabetes, comes forth from evidence-based practice." Healy points out how nurses are more aware of infection control because of evidence-based practice.

"Back then, we didn't wear gloves," Mains said, as it wasn't a normal practice for nurses to wear gloves during procedures.

"That makes me shudder to even think about it," laughs Healy, because she was taught to always wear gloves.

Mains has seen an enormous rise in the types of medication available during her nursing career. Because of the number of medications available now, she states, "We highly encourage patients to carry a list of their medications, not just the names, but the dose and how often they are supposed to be taking it." This helps doctors and nurses in other healthcare settings when they need to decipher which medication a patient is taking if they don't have a list with them. She also encourages people who are traveling to take along a copy of their medical records, should they need any medical assistance. Avera, along with most hospitals, offers a patient portal that you can sign up for to have secure online access to your medical information.

Culture and values of society has changed the nursing field over the past several years. In the past, alcohol was the primary drug that nurses saw some patients abusing. Today, that's expanded to include street drugs, over-the-counter drugs and prescription drugs. Along with being trained to

recognize toxicology, nurses are also trained to recognize child abuse and sexual abuse, more prominent in today's society than several years ago.

Nurses today have different concerns than their predecessors: how to care for people who are living longer, caring for chronic illnesses that are more prevalent and caring for diseases like diabetes and cardiovascular disease that have spread to a younger generation. Palliative care, hospice and end of life issues are topics developed over the past several years. Healy and Mains agree that continuing education is the best way for nurses to stay abreast of new topics, from conferences and in-services to reading on their own.

Patient safety has been emphasized more over the years. Mains states that teamwork is stressed much more now than when she was in school. "Teamwork between..." she hesitates, looking for the right word.

"Interdisciplinary teams," Healy chimes in and Mains agrees as she smiled. A perfect example of great nursing teamwork happened right before my eyes. I can see how well they work together. By interdisciplinary teams, Healy means teamwork between all medical professionals involved with the patient: physician, nurse, occupational therapy, physical therapy, etc.

Mains points out that during her first few years in nursing, it was all in-patient procedures. Now it's gone to mostly outpatient procedures. Healy feels that, with the Affordable Care Act, there's been a shift in medical care, from a reactive to a pro-active society. "As a society, we needed that. We have needed that preventative care," she states. Same-day procedures have grown, even just in the last two years. Healy explains how same day procedures are steps that people are taking to remain healthy, to prevent a medical condition from happening. "With the medications and the diagnostics, we are hopefully as a society only going to stay more preventative," she states.

With so many changes in the fast-paced world of nursing, I wondered if the experienced nurses and the new graduates can mesh in their work environment

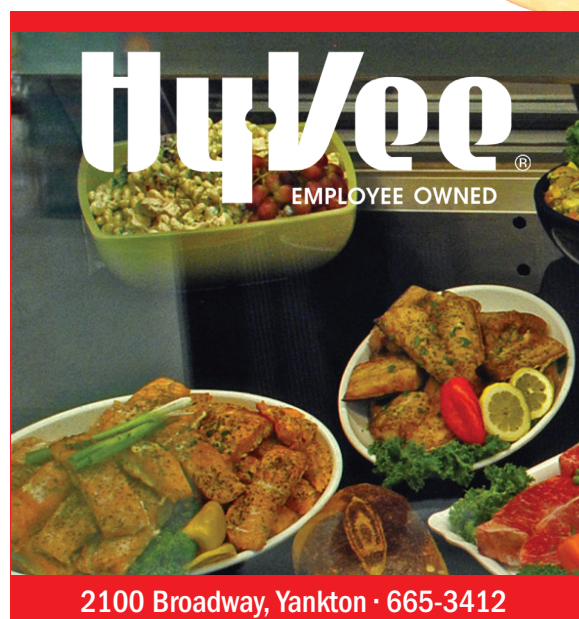
❖ NURSING *continued on page 21*



**Staci Stengle**

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