

SI Alliance Nurse Champ

Nursing champ Canterbury: Robyn Hulme, Aged Care



40-years ago, Robyn Hulme, started nursing training in Ashburton Hospital. Now a little further north and many years later, she finds herself as Facility Manager at Cashmere View Rest Home and Hospital still bringing her passion to nursing striving to enable aged residents to “love the life they are living”.

“I’m passionate about all people – residents, staff and families – all working together in an environment where the goal is the same; that each should feel valued and appreciated,” says Robyn.

Nursing in aged care is a passion; one shared by all nursing staff says Robyn, that isn’t often valued.

“We love the work we do, and we strive to do our best,” she says.

“But there is a continuing devaluing of the contribution that residential aged care is making to the wellbeing of society.”

Robyn says that despite this, she believes in the value and contribution she and other are making

Her career has provided some extraordinary emotional and rewarding moments.

“Not every day is a pleasure but most days I receive feedback which makes it worthwhile,” says Robyn.

“A staff member receiving praise from family or residents, a resident achieving a simple goal or a palliative resident dying a pain-free death all contribute to the job well worth doing.”

A particular case stands out for the 57-year-old Cantabrian.

“I was caring for a Japanese tourist after she became unwell on a trip to New Zealand. Tests had revealed she had advanced cancer. The prognosis was poor and she was steadily deteriorating further. I had been asked to accompany her home to Japan,” she explains.

“I was in the ambulance on the way from Christchurch Hospital to the airport when I had an overwhelming feeling of inadequacy. How could I help this woman safely to her destination and what on earth had I let myself in for? I reasoned that this patient had only me so I needed to put feelings aside and go to work.”

She says she symbolically rolled up her sleeves and got to work, caring for her patient who was lying in a hammock in the rear of the plane.

“I worked for the next 16 hours to ensure my patient had a safe transition and the resulting sense of satisfaction was huge. Unfortunately, I never find out what happened to my patient.”

Although Robyn started her career in Aged Care – in a ward in Burwood eventually obtaining the role of Charge Nurse– she moved into surgical nursing through several clinical settings, gaining her first Surgical Charge Nurse position in a Colorectal/ Upper Gastrointestinal ward. In 2003 she was appointed as Surgical Nursing Director for Christchurch Hospital, a position she held until 2008.

She has also benefitted from a solid tertiary education. At 30 she was awarded a year of full-time study to complete an Advanced Diploma in Nursing through Christchurch Polytechnic, then having completed training through the Hospital system obtained a Bachelor of Nursing in 1998. Later in 2004 a Postgraduate Diploma in Health Sciences endorsed in Nursing.

“The majority of the education that I undertook was funded. There is a lot of professional development available to Nurses, a recently funded programme being the Gerontology Acceleration Programme. This type of programme enables nurses to be exposed to different clinical settings within aged care whilst obtaining a postgrad qualification.

Robyn transferred to an aged care facility in 2008, taking on a number of challenging opportunities.

“The facility I took over was struggling after poor audit findings, and then in 2012 I transferred to Cashmere View Rest Home and Hospital where I am overseeing the build and resident transition to a new wing following structural damage of the Rest Home.”

The career move has come with its challenges but Robyn says she always makes sure she actively enjoys the work that she is doing.

“And I never come back from a period of leave without knowing when my next break will be!”
