Preparing nurses for a career in the OR

Back row, from left: Kathy Radcliffe, Alaine Young and Denise McLaughlin, Perioperative education clinicians. Front row, from left: Giovanna Graci, RN, Marta Meyer-Neves, RPN, and Cynthia Browne, RN, the first students to complete the Perioperative Specialization Project.

Giovanna Graci had a smooth transition into her new RN position in the General Operating Room. This is thanks to the pilot Perioperative Specialization Project which gives HHS nurses the opportunity to become perioperative nurses without having to take a leave of absence to enroll in a specialized perioperative program that teaches them the required knowledge and skills.

This in-house program uses the curriculum of the Association of periOperative Registered Nurses (AORN) and is taught by Perioperative education clinicians Denise McLaughlin, Kathy Radcliffe and Alaine Young. Course content is aligned with recognized
Operating Room Nurses Association of Canada’s (ORNAC) Standards and Practices for Perioperative practice, as well as existing Hamilton Health Sciences policies and procedures. This enables Perioperative Services and Clinical Practice and Education to run the course as required based on the needs of HHS.

To enroll in the program, students must have already been hired into a position in HHS’ Perioperative Program. Successful candidates complete a five-week theoretical component, followed immediately by an intensive clinical orientation period.

“The program combines online education with the traditional classroom interaction to provide the basic concepts of perioperative nursing,” said Kathy Radcliffe, Perioperative education clinician. “Each module has a final test that helps the student assess their learning needs and identify concepts that require review. The clinical portion of the program allows the student to apply the knowledge and skills that they learned in the classroom to the OR setting.”

The theoretical component includes subjects such as safety in the surgical setting, instrumentation and professionalism. And in the clinical setting, students learn about scrubbing, gowning and gloving, establishing a sterile field, draping, and performing surgical counts.

“The educators involved in the development of the program created a simulated OR where the students could go through the expected duties and responsibilities,” said Giovanna, who was one of the first students to complete the program. “They also provided realistic problems and issues that we could work through as a team. The program really helped me integrate into my dream job.”

“I am thrilled we are able to offer this in-house course,” said Anthea Banks, director of Clinical Practice and Education. “I want to thank the OR educators who initiated the idea for all their work involved in setting up this course, along with AnneMarie Vansickle, manager of Clinical Practice and Education, and Leslie Gauthier, director of the Perioperative Program, for their hard work and support to bring this to fruition.”