

# Nurses Provide Essential Continuity Of Care, Optimizing Results

Better health outcomes result not only from personalized medicine. Patient advocacy and education, often implemented by nursing staff, have been shown to provide multiple benefits, from decreased patient pain scores to greater postsurgical satisfaction (*Health Expect* 2018;



**Wen-Chiao Peng, APN**  
Neurology and Neuro-Spine Units



**Colleen Wojna, RN**  
Ortho-Spine and Joint Replacement Units

21[1]:57-63; *Spine J* 2019;19[5]:840-845).

Englewood Health's Spine Center prioritizes patient comfort as a way to ensure both patient satisfaction and optimal outcomes. The nurses at the Spine Center rely on training, compassion and depth of experience to provide continuity of

care with the utmost professionalism, from the preoperative stage all the way to three months after surgery.

"I always try to speak to patients as if I'm talking to family or a close friend," said Wen-Chiao Peng, APN, who practices in the neurology and neuro-spine units at the Spine Center. Peng, who has worked at Englewood for 18 years, uses the preoperative period to forge a connection with her patients so they will open up to her about their concerns and gauge their anxiety. This preoperative period also provides an opportunity to arrange physical therapy and visiting nurse services for postoperative recovery.

"We make sure to empower patients with knowledge so they can feel comfortable and know we will make the right decisions together," Peng said. "When patients feel at ease and have a sense of responsibility, it makes outcomes better."

In her initial consultations, Peng explains the virtues of neuro-spine surgery at Englewood, offering patients the opportunity to talk to former patients who have undergone simi-

**"I'll never ask, 'How is your pain? Does your pump work properly?' I'll ask a patient to hand me something that I can't reach. That way, I examine their functional mobility and recovery without heightening any anxiety."**

—Wen-Chiao Peng, APN



One of the nurses checking on a patient in an orthopedic room. Note: Photo taken prior to masking requirements.

lar procedures; notes the latest technology used to improve outcomes and mitigate complication rates; and addresses the many concerns patients may have developed through their own internet research of worst-case scenarios. This patient education can be important, as studies have shown large gaps in patients' health literacy in low back pain management and other spine conditions, which can affect how patients prepare for surgery (*Spine J* 2018;18[2]:370-376; *Orthop Nurs* 2019;38[4]:253-261).

"For spine surgery, sometimes it's just about letting the patient know that advanced technology will monitor their nerves and alert the surgeon if they are too close to the nerve," Peng said.

The Spine Center provides every patient with a comprehensive book on what to expect before, during and after surgery. Peng and her colleagues encourage patients to pepper them with any questions that may arise after reading the guide.