



The nursing team is in frequent contact with families and medical staff.

### Patient Advocacy Plays A Crucial Role

“Sometimes patients can be overwhelmed, so we prioritize bringing family members into the fold and making sure we’re always available to answer their questions as well,” said Colleen Wojna, RN, who works in the ortho-spine and joint replacement units at Englewood. A proud graduate of Englewood’s nursing school, Wojna has spent her entire career at Englewood, honing her skills as a patient advocate.

As a patient advocate, a nurse navigator and a care coordinator, Wojna introduces herself to all of the patients who come in preoperatively for the “Joint University” class taught by her colleague, Marie Sarubbi, APN, ONP-C, who coordinates nursing care for the ortho-spine unit (see page 14).

Wojna disseminates her contact information so patients and family members can contact her anytime with any questions and concerns. She provides patients with answers, and on those rare occasions she doesn’t know an answer, she finds it.

Not only does she offer emotionally supportive care, she arranges appointments, secures referrals and facilitates medical clearances.

“Being available to provide reassurance for the patient and their families is vital to making them comfortable in our hands,” Wojna said. “Equally important is serving as their medical liaison and booking appointments to take as much off their plate as possible, like paperwork and phone calls. That’s not what any patient should worry about in an anxious time.”

The preoperative relationship paves the way for a patient’s successful journey and decreases readmission rates, which is why its importance is stressed by nurses.

“My role increases patient and family satisfaction and decreases anxiety,” Wojna added.

During the preoperative stage, Wojna completes a functional, frailty and pain assessment of the patient. She also makes sure the patient’s discharge plan is in place and the home environment is ready with whatever they will need, such as walkers and commodes. She ensures that a complete physical therapy program is in place, the patient understands their pain management plan, and a visiting nurse and visiting physical therapist are regularly scheduled.

“We go to great lengths to reassure patients that we have a great team that collaborates to make sure every part of their care plan is taken care of,” Wojna said.

After surgery, Peng keeps patients comfortable through humor and casual conversation while performing a physical examination. Through experience and empathy, she has learned to engage patients in conversations that will solicit responses about their recovery.

“I’ll ask, ‘How was your last night here? Were you able to sleep well?’” Peng said. “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.”

On the joint replacement side, the continuity of care goes on postoperatively as Wojna checks on patients, answers lingering questions and explores ways to help them further. After discharge, Wojna monitors the patient for up to 90 days, maintaining a relationship with the patient and family. She confirms patients’ post-op checkups, monitors progress in reaching their recovery goals, and arranges any appointments or additional equipment they may need.

“The continuity of care from pre-op to well after they have been discharged means we are a one-stop shop for patients,” Wojna said. “They can call their one contact to address their needs and rely on our team to help resolve their issues. We consistently receive overwhelmingly positive feedback from patients, so our process must be working.”



Consulting with doctors on patient care is most important.