Collaborative and hands-on—those are common themes in letters nominating Lorna Eberle, RN, BSN, CNOR, as the 2010 OR Manager of the Year.

As director of perioperative services at Providence St Peter Hospital (PSPH) in Olympia, Washington, Eberle manages, in addition to the 11-room OR, 8 other departments with a total of 190 FTEs.

The 12 letters from all levels of the hospital praised Eberle as forthright, honest, and calm, embodying the mission of the faith-based Providence Health & Services system, which has 27 hospitals in 5 states.

‘A skilled skipper’

PSPH’s medical director of perioperative services, Bryan D. Wales, MD, called Eberle “a skilled skipper” who “navigates the rocky shoals of a dangerous shore, yet manages to keep the ship afloat.”

He told of one example in which Eberle worked with him to provide care for an autistic child who was brought to the OR to be sedated for routine lab tests. The family had traveled a great distance, and no one else had been able to provide this care.

Chris N. Griffith, MD, chair of the surgery department, wrote: “She is excellent at building bridges and is very quick to resolve issues before they become larger issues that threaten our institutional integrity.”

Eberle is particularly strong in interfacing with surgeons, he noted, citing the OR’s smooth transition to a formal time-out before surgery, though significant pushback had been expected.

He attributed the good outcome largely to Eberle’s “care and concern,” noting that she took time to call each surgeon the day before his or her scheduled block to explain the process and make sure each one understood the intentions. During the first week, Eberle was at the control desk each morning as the surgeons arrived to remind them of the initiative. She also backed the staff as the time-out was introduced.

Eberle says the respect reflected in the letters is mutual.

“It’s very much a collaborative environment. We all work as a team. The interpersonal relationships are very good,” she says.

She adds that the hospital’s core values are strong—“you feel them when you walk in the door.” Part of her success, she says, is that “I feel I have incorporated those into my daily practice and my interactions.”

A sense of calm

Bonny Melby, RN, MS, assistant manager and educator for the short-stay unit, commented that Eberle “has that balance of confronting a sensitive incident assertively yet with sensitivity” and “always conveys a sense of calm.”

Eberle was also recognized for supporting the staff.
“I firmly believe I am the nurse I am today from the support, direction, and confidence she has helped me maintain,” wrote Carol Cairone, RN, CNOR, OR staff nurse and laser resource nurse.

Last year, Eberle pitched in washing instruments and assembling sets when part of the OR staff and all of the sterile processing staff went out on a one-day strike. The OR ran a full surgical schedule.

“Lorna spent 2 days working hands-on in this department,” so patient care could continue uninterrupted, said William Sjolin, RN, BA, CNOR, CRNFA, assistant clinical manager of perioperative services.

Others commended Eberle’s stewardship of resources.

The surgery manager, Lorie Khorsand, RN, BSN, CNOR, noted that Eberle has led major supply chain initiatives as co-chair of the Providence system’s Perioperative Resource Council, tackling projects to standardize suture and endomechanicals, drapes and gowns, and orthopedic implants for the system’s 27 surgical departments.

### Jumping in as a new grad

Eberle began her career at Providence St Peter the Monday after graduating from nursing school in 1976, thinking she’d stay a year or two. But PSPH has become her home. After a year on a nursing unit, she moved to the OR, having learned in a nursing school rotation that “that is where my heart is.”

Why does she stay in the high-stress OR environment?

“I love my job, and I work with great people,” she says. “We have great relationships with our surgeons and anesthesiologists and our staff.”

She also embraces PSPH’s mission. “We care for everyone—it doesn’t matter who they are,” she says. “It’s all about treating the person with respect and compassion.”

[Back to the top]