

RHRCC's ED nurses enjoy excitement, rewards of their work

Saying a life is something that most people never experience, but it's all in a day's work for emergency department nurses. Renee Robinson, RN, Emergency Department nursing coordinator at Rockcastle Hospital and Respiratory Care Center, and Judy Baker, RN, said their jobs are never boring.

The two nurses are very experienced in emergency care. Both have worked at Rockcastle Hospital for 19 years. Robinson has been in the Emergency Department for 16 of those years, and Baker has been there 13 years.

"A lot of people come through

these doors," Robinson said. "The exciting part for us is that you never know what type of case it will be."

Part of the hustle and bustle comes from the number of trauma cases that are seen in the emergency department, and there are many of those.

"The true emergency situations we're faced with are everything from heart attacks to gunshots and stabbings to farm, car and ATV accidents," Robinson said. "When critically ill patients must be transferred to a trauma center, a nurse often accompanies them in the ambulance to monitor the patient during the transport."

Baker said some trauma cases also

are transported to UK via helicopter.

"It only takes about 20 minutes, and that can make a big difference for someone who needs the care of a trauma unit," she said. "It greatly improves their chances when they can be stabilized here, then quickly move to a trauma unit."

Both nurses said one of the most rewarding aspects of their job is when a patient comes back to see them.

"When someone says 'You saved my life, it's a really good feeling,'" she said. "One former patient always hugs me when he sees me. He jokes about it and says I'm the only other woman his wife lets him hug."

Baker remembers the story of a man from Ohio who was traveling home. He stopped at Rockcastle's Emergency Department complaining of pain in his jaw. Baker told him it could indicate a heart problem. The traveler left saying he'd decided not to see a doctor, but returned a few minutes later saying he'd changed his mind.

"He was having a heart attack," Baker said. "His heart actually stopped while he was here. We got it going again and administered a clot-dissolving drug. He was lucky that he suffered no damage."

"I hate to think what might have happened to him if he had tried to continue driving home that day," she said.

Baker said the man returned to the hospital with his wife at a later date just to thank the ED staff.

"That's very rewarding," Baker said.

Unfortunately, as in all emergency departments, not all patient stories have a happy ending. For the nurses, the toughest part of the job is losing a patient.

"There will always be that one that can't be saved," Robinson said. "It's very upsetting to see someone pass away."

In addition to nursing skills, the emergency department nurses must be adept at comforting and counseling patients and family members.

"Every one deals with stress and grief differently," Robinson said. "We have to understand that and be ready to handle it."

Baker agrees, and said her faith plays a role in the way she performs her job.

"My Christian faith and the ability of our competent doctors and ED staff give me the courage and confidence to work in this department where I am faced with a wide variety of critical situations," she said.

But it's not all trauma and drama. Robinson said working in the ED

provides nurses a great opportunity to work with employees in all departments and to participate in many types of nursing activities.

"Occasionally, we even deliver a baby," she said. "Working in a small hospital, you learn to do everything, and you learn how every department works. Most of us have been in several other departments, which is great training for working in emergency."

Shirley Wallin Behr is very familiar with Rockcastle Hospital's Emergency Department and with Robinson, who is her neighbor.

"I worked for the state social services department and have brought many people to this hospital over the years," she said. "I've had treatment here myself, and I've had good experiences. Renee and Millie Eaton are two of my favorite people."

Eaton is a clerk in the Emergency Department and is one of the first staff members people usually see when entering the hospital for most types of treatment.

Behr said Robinson has been a help to her outside the hospital as well.

"When my husband was ill, I could always count on Renee to come over and check on us and help out," Behr said.

Baker said working with the people of Rockcastle County is one of her favorite aspects of the job.

"People here are very friendly, and I like getting to see them and work with them," she said.

ED nurses at Rockcastle Hospital are certified in Advanced Cardiac Life Support and Basic Life Support. The department employs 10 people including nurses and clerks. Dr. William P. McElwain and Dr. David Brubaker treat patients during the day Monday - Friday. Dr. Nancy Antontacci and Dr. Lexington physician's group E-MC sees patients nights, weekends and holidays.

Rockcastle Hospital and Respiratory Care Center, Inc. is a not-for-profit community hospital that operates inpatient and outpatient acute care programs, 60 long-term care beds for ventilator-dependent patients, a home health care service, the Medical Arts Building and Rockcastle Health and Rehabilitation Center, Inc. The hospital was established in 1956, is accredited by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO), and treats patients from across Kentucky, Tennessee and several other states. For more information, log on to:

www.rockcastlehospital.org



Renee Robinson, RN, left, and Millie Eaton, review patient information.

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