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Early in my life I liked to help people. I was a Certified Nursing Assistant in high school and becoming a Registered Nurse (RN) seemed to make perfect sense. The same thinking continued when I saw the recruiters on campus and joined the Army during nursing school. I had always wanted to be part of the Armed Forces and when I found out there was an opportunity to not only serve as a RN, but a RN in the Operating Room (OR), I was ecstatic! You mean, I can be an Army Officer, work in the OR helping people, and jump out of airplanes!?! Sign me up!

Early in my Army career, I was strictly a perioperative nurse with little to no experience in the sterile processing department (SPD) despite receiving baseline training in the perioperative nursing specialty course. As a perioperative nurse, I knew I wanted to help and advocate for my patients; I wanted to help them have the very best outcome. That is, after all, why I chose this profession! What I didn't realize at the time was the essential role SPD played in creating those outcomes!

Fast forward a couple of years, my supervisor and mentor was moved from the OR to be our chief of SPD. As a young, naive professional, and not knowing what I now know, it was upsetting to me that our leadership would take our best and brightest and move them to SPD! At the time, I felt betrayed and thought it was a serious waste of his talents. It took him a little time, but in the long run he made things so much better for the SPD staff, the OR staff and, ultimately, for our patients! We weren't experiencing the litany of daily issues with our instrument sets that seemed so typical prior to his going to SPD. At this point, the epiphany came! If I could learn what he knows and get involved in SPD, I could make things better not for one patient at a time (like in the OR), but I can affect the whole organization's patient population! After all, a successful surgical outcome starts with a properly processed instrument and we weren't just processing instruments for the OR, but the entire hospital including the wards and clinics!

After this epiphany, I vowed to learn, share and champion the sterile processing profession as much as I possibly could. As I've continued on this journey of growing my knowledge, collaborating and feeling passionate about SPD's "unsung hero", "thankless" status, I've always taken any opportunity to advocate for the profession and ultimately our patients!

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