

“A nurse demonstrates the standard by identifying options to resolve ethical issues.”

— Professional Standards



THE STANDARD OF CARE.

Photo: Suavek

AS A NURSE, YOUR NUMBER ONE PRIORITY is client-centred care. But at the Toronto East Detention Centre, where Nicholas Joachimides, RN, works, another main priority is security—for the inmates, for the staff members and for the public.

“In a hospital, you might never think, ‘I’d better watch my scissors very closely because the patient might grab them and stab me,’” Nicholas explains. “Here, everything you have is a potential weapon.”


Nicholas, who also works at Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital, is the first paediatric nurse to graduate with a master’s degree in wound care from the University of Western Ontario. He entered the program to help children with disabilities. But he realized that the problem-solving skills he had acquired in that practice setting would also benefit his clients at the jail.

Within the jail, nurses face a range of procedural and ethical dilemmas. “In the hospital you don’t bat an eye at using roller gauze to adhere a dressing to a wound,” says Nicholas. “But in a jail, prisoners can use the gauze to harm themselves or others.” Even something as simple as extra dressing pads to drain a wound can be shoved down the toilet to flood the institution.

To balance client care with overall safety, Nicholas consults with a corrections officer to ensure client and institutional safety. For example, he decides which kinds of dressings are appropriate for each client, or whether to

use fewer materials and change dressings more frequently. Sometimes Nicholas will recommend moving a client to a safer, less-populated area of the jail until a wound heals so that other prisoners don’t have access to the client’s medical materials. And Nicholas and the correctional staff are often faced with the challenge of deciding when inmates require more specialized care outside of the jail, and what necessary precautions to take.

Nicholas faces ethical aspects of the job outside of the prison as well. “People have shunned me in social circles because I work with inmates. They say, ‘How would the victim feel knowing you’re advocating for the health of a murderer or pedophile?’” He admits it is not easy to advocate for a client who has committed serious crimes, but by identifying his own personal values and ensuring they do not conflict with professional practice, Nicholas is able to focus on the care he provides.

Wounds never go untreated, nor are they treated with less care than any other client would expect. “Your main goal is the same; provide optimum care for optimum outcome.” 

At the College, the phrase “the standard of care” is more than a tag line for the logo; it’s about setting the bar for safe, effective and ethical nursing care through the practice standards and guidelines. This page features nurses who have raised the bar on the standard of care they provide their clients.