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Speare Appoints New Nurse Director of Oncology and ICU

PLYMOUTH, N.H. --- As the newly named Nurse Director of Speare Memorial Hospital's Intensive Care Unit (ICU) and Oncology Clinic, Donna Toohey brings her exceptional medical background and a story all her own.



Toohey is a certified emergency nurse, pediatric and adult, a certified flight nurse, and a certified pediatric and adult sexual assault nurse examiner. She has taught numerous college classes as a clinical nurse instructor for Vermont Technical College and she also is certified to teach Advanced Cardiac Life Support, Pediatric Advanced Life Support, and Basic Life Support.

"She had prior experience in all of the areas that were perfect for the task at hand," explains Kris Hering, chief nursing officer who hired Toohey.

"She also had been an amazing day/night nurse supervisor in the few months she had been with SMH and we knew she would be the perfect fit."

The perfect fit she is. After only two months into the position she is already making patient care improvements. In the intensive care unit nurses will be making rounds every hour, and beginning in April they will be doing bedside reporting. "Bedside reporting is a way to get the patients involved when the nurses switch shifts," explains Toohey. "It's a great way to make sure no symptom goes without notice."

In the Oncology Clinic Toohey has opened Speare's first outpatient Infusion Center. "This is a relaxing place for outpatients to receive treatment," Toohey says. Previously many outpatient infusions were given in the ER. "Now patients don't have to receive their medicine in the ER, they can come to the Oncology Clinic where the environment is calm and quiet," Toohey notes.

Another reason Toohey was such a good fit for the position was her personal story of healing. In April of 2010 she applied for the day/night nurse supervisor position at Speare. On the same day she found out she had the job she was also diagnosed with stage three breast cancer.

"It was hard for everyone," Toohey reminisced, "especially my 15 year old daughter Alex." Almost immediately after being diagnosed Toohey underwent two surgeries and by June was back working and under going chemotherapy at the same time.

Seated at her desk, which is covered with pictures of her and her daughter with smiles from ear to ear, Toohey runs her fingers through her short blonde hair as she recalls, "I was still able to ride my bike 30 miles a day during chemo until I fell ill in September. But now I am happy to say I am cancer free and beginning to bike again."

As for her time spent at Speare, she has nothing but compliments and good words for her fellow staff members. "This hospital has embraced me and cared for me," Toohey says. "There was never a day I walked down the hallways without people asking me how I was doing and how I felt."

She also had a support system at home; her life partner and her daughter Alex. "He was by my side for everything," Toohey said of her life partner. "Without his love and support my struggle would have been much more difficult. I am truly blessed."

Now eight months later Toohey can say that she is cancer free and looks forward to the coming years here at Speare. "I work in a happy place filled with warm, compassionate, wonderful people" Toohey says of the Speare community. "I love working here and consider myself very lucky."

Speare Memorial Hospital is a 24-hour, acute care, non-profit community hospital and health care provider serving Plymouth and the communities of central New Hampshire for more than a century. Visit online at www.spearehospital.com and join us on Facebook.

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