

Thank you WDPONA for funding me to be able to attend the ORNAC conference in Regina, Saskatchewan. After listening to many speakers the week of May 9th to the 13th, 2011, two of those I would consider memorable to speak of.

These two women enlightened me as to what it is like to be a patient from diagnosis to recovery, what their fears were and how they chose to deal with their illness. As a nurse in the operating room we don't get to know the patient long enough nor do we see them afterwards to know how they are physically, emotionally and the stability of their family unit dealing with the illness such as cancer, as these two women dealt with.

The first woman was the actress Jill Eikenberry known for her role on television "L.A. Law" spoke along with her husband actor Michael Tucker. She is a breast cancer survivor in 1986 and again 2 years ago, and activist. After hiding her illness thinking she was going to die from this she realized the importance of telling her story with humour and hope and stressing breast cancer education and early detection and treatment.

Recently she spoke at another nursing conference and at the end of her talk one perioperative nurse greeted her that took care of her 25 years ago then again 2 years ago. This nurse remembered her fear, Jill Eikenberry appreciated this nurse and all nurses for what we do.

The other speaker was Pamela Wallin who was a journalist on TV and radio, a diplomat, entrepreneur, author, serves on several corporate boards, received numerous awards and in 2008 was appointed to the Senate of Canada. This incredible woman doesn't include this in her definition of success. Her two definitions of success is one, to reinvent herself in a crisis and second is the company she keeps. This woman interviewed all kinds of successful and influential people but when it came to making a decision regarding herself and health she would turn to her father to seek some sort of guidance. She has since become a spokes person for early detection of colon cancer.

If there is a chance to listen to a cancer survivor speak of their experience being a patient please take the opportunity to do so, some times I think we forget they are not just another bowel surgery or lumpectomy to hurry and get done to get to the next case. That there is a human being on the table and they need to be acknowledged and valued. The team in that O.R. should not talk about their little life problems amongst each other and focus their attention on the patient emotional needs and fears that's in that room.

Thank you,

Donna Casagrande
WDPONA Secretary/Treasurer