

CAROLE LECONTE, RN

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A strong desire to “do more” for her patients inspired Carole Leconte to become a nurse. “While working as a certified nurse aide, I was amazed at the things that the registered nurses knew, and the love some of them had for their jobs,” she recalls. “I believed that I can do more than just ADL (activities of daily living) care. I felt the need to excel and go back to school; I wanted to do something in my career that is challenging, interesting and makes a difference in people’s lives.”

Observation is crucial to patient care, Leconte points out, “We are usually ‘in the know’ about a patient’s life situation.” In her 30 years as a staff nurse, this type of close attention has had a major impact on her patients, according to Leconte, who cites quick action in a specific patient’s care as one of her proudest moments.

“One day, one of our residents who previously was alert, oriented to person, place and time, and ambulatory was observed in bed, still with his nightgown on,” she reminisces. “He appeared to be sleeping, slow to respond and hard to arouse. Every day when I entered his room, he normally called out ‘Tic,’ and I would answer ‘Toc,’ and proceed to small conversation while giving him his medication. When he didn’t greet me normally, I knew right away that something was wrong. I quickly took his vital signs: he had rapid heart rate of 120, blood pressure 210/115, respiration 20 and afebrile. He could not follow any simple command; he was not able to lift up his left arm. Right away I called the doctor and the resident was transferred out to the emergency room with an acute CVA (cerebrovascular accident.)

“He spent nearly a month in the hospital and lost total control of his left upper extremity, with weakness on his lower extremity,” she continued. “Had he stayed longer without the quick assessment and swift action to get him the emergency care that he needed, it might have been worse; he might have lost total control of his left side. Knowing a patient so well instills compassion in us.”

Having compassion and watching patients’ health improve is a motivating factor for Leconte, as is working for NYC Health + Hospitals, she says. “Being a nurse for the city’s public health system is unique in that care is genuine and is rendered regardless of the patient’s financial capabilities.”

Even after a career spanning three decades, Leconte is committed to continuous improvement and the quest for excellence. “I want to improve things because of the difference I am making in patient’s lives and want to be kept abreast with the evolution

of technology," she notes. "Excellence resonates with me, because it is a combination of values: a nurse should render care to patient with dignity and integrity. They have to be honest, truthful and adhere to moral and ethical principles. They have to be compassionate and empathetic.

"Nurses are held accountable for their actions," Leconte continues. "They are responsible for acting in situations where the patient's safety and well-being are compromised. As a nurse, we have to show respect, by listening to what patient has to say; respect builds feelings of trust and well-being, which allows the patient to feel safe to express themselves. Excellence is the result of all those values put into practice; it boils down to one common goal: patient well-being."