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Forging Unique Nursing Careers

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Forging unique nursing careers

Karen Fox GSH '77, Linfield '93, Peggy Woodward '96 and David Shubin '95 all have degrees in nursing from Linfield Good Samaritan School of Nursing, but that's where the similarity ends.

They have used their degrees to create a special niche, providing examples of the versatility of the nursing profession, within and outside the traditional hospital setting. Equipped with a liberal arts education, these three graduates, and others like them, are melding their careers with other interests in unlikely locations – in this case, in the legal arena and on ships.

The Medical Resource Network

Fox and Woodward are medical sleuths – they sift through medical records looking for the facts regardless of whether they support or refute a legal or medical claim.

Fox is founder and president of The Medical Resource Network Inc. (MRN), a consulting firm that offers expertise in analyzing complex medical issues for clients. The information they uncover might be used in medical malpractice cases, mass tort product liability cases or personal injury claims. The work can involve combing through massive numbers of medical records to decipher and pull out information that may be pertinent to a claim or lawsuit. Because much of their research is pre-litigation, their results have the potential to help clients avoid lawsuits by identifying the medical facts in a case. They also help pharmaceutical companies by identifying physicians interested in conducting drug trials.

“Sometimes we review medical records or provide information that shows that a specific standard of care was not met or why a complication should not have occurred,” Fox said. “At the same time, we might be able to explain why a certain situation occurred.”

They have been able to avert potential problems for some clients just by evaluating specific practices and recommending changes to prevent accidents from happening, said Woodward, vice president of operations.

The work can be painstaking and involve hundreds of hours of reading and review. One case involved the review of 8,000 medical records for the U.S. Navy. Never afraid of a challenge, the women put together a team that spent six to eight weeks in Washington to complete the assignment.

Their medical background as nurses gives them a unique perspective in the work.

“Nurses have a knowledge base that allows them to review the records and understand what they are reading,” Fox said. “Our job is to give our clients the broadest picture possible and the best information to allow them to make a reasonable decision. That’s why our tagline makes sense – ‘medical fact finding for sound decision making.’”



Karen Fox '93, left, and Peggy Woodward '96 are legal nurse consultants, using medical facts to support or refute medical claims. The Medical Resource Network, founded by Fox in 1993, is one of the largest consulting firms of its kind in the country.

Woodward practiced law for seven years before taking time out when her children were small. When the time came to return to work, she wanted to combine her interests in law and medicine and enrolled at Linfield Good Samaritan School of Nursing.

She knew nothing about legal nurse consulting at the time, but after hearing Fox speak at Linfield, it seemed like a natural combination. She joined the firm right after graduation.

Legal nurse consulting is a relatively young field, existing for about 25 years. Fox, who first graduated from the Good Samaritan School of Nursing, got her start in the Oregon Attorney General's office reviewing medical records in claims against the state. She worked for a defense law firm and completed her BSN at Linfield before launching her own firm in 1993. What started out in her own home has grown to a company with 16 employees and an additional 12 contract nurses who assist in projects as needed. MRN is one of the largest legal nurse consulting firms in the country.

Fox and Woodward admit this type of work isn't for everyone.

"There is an enormous opportunity to continue to learn," Woodward said. "The nurses who do well here are those who enjoy an academic approach."

The work is analytical in nature and requires strong writing skills. "It is never boring, and there is always a new problem to solve," she added. "We call it the graduate school of life because you are always learning something about the business or about managing people. The ability to practice nursing



David Shubin '95 has combined his business savvy with his nursing degree to provide health care to the maritime industry and establish a travel and immunization clinic in Portland.

autonomously appeals to me and sometimes we find out the most incredible things."

Meeting maritime needs

Shubin admits he has a head for business and a heart for nursing – and he's incorporated both into one dynamic career.

He has developed a unique company that provides health care to the maritime industry. Shubin, along with Dan Vasend '96, worked to create a company that eventually became The Pacific International Maritime Medical Service, Inc. It provides 24-hour service to meet the health needs of sailors aboard ships in the Columbia River deep water ports from Astoria to Portland. That includes everything from immunizations to routine medical care to injuries.

"If there's a need on the vessel, we will take care of it," said Shubin, who expanded his business in 2003 to open the Travel and Immunization Clinic of Portland. The clinic offers pre-travel consultations for those traveling to the developing world and carries a full range of travel products.

"Patients can come in, get their vaccinations, consultation and advice, and are able to pick up their products as well," Shubin said.

Shubin's entrepreneurial savvy emerged while working at the Old Town Clinic, a nonprofit medical facility targeting the homeless in downtown Portland. Shubin was instructed to facilitate the closing of the financially struggling operation. Instead, he turned it around.

"Even though it's a nonprofit homeless clinic, you still have to run it like a business," said Shubin, who utilized insurance resources and improved the billing infrastructure. "This means making smart business decisions, rather than emotional decisions. In the end we were able to keep the clinic going for a few additional years and it served many people."

Shubin had no background in the maritime industry when doctors alerted him to the need for the medical service. His operational experience and medical background made him a logical fit.

"I had the ability to synthesize medicine with business and was able to deliver both of them," Shubin said. "A lot of people do one thing or the other. I think you can do the right thing by your patient every time and still make the business of health care work for everybody."

On a daily basis, Shubin is able to combine his business knowledge and hands-on nursing skills.

"I enjoy the creativity of making incredibly complex things fit together," he said. "There is great satisfaction in that. Interactions with patients are extraordinary. You change an outcome, you make a difference."

In the future, Shubin hopes to expand his business to other port cities on the West Coast.

– Laura Davis and Mardi Mileham