

Cornelia Marko RN(EC), Nurse Practitioner

Cornelia Marko attended the University of Windsor's School of Nursing, obtaining her BScN degree in 1983, her certificate in Nurse Practitioner in Primary Care in 1997, and her Master of Nursing degree in 2010.

"My clinical training occurred in Windsor's local hospitals, some of which no longer exist," says Marko, who has trained at the former Riverview and Salvation Army Grace Hospitals, Windsor Regional Hospital, I.O.D.E. and Hotel Dieu Grace. "I gained exposure to public health nursing through the Windsor Essex County Health Unit."

After Marko received her undergraduate degree, she traveled to northern Ontario where she worked in outpost nursing with Health and Welfare Canada, at a federal hospital which serviced the Cree and Inuit population. "My newly acquired knowledge and skills were put to the test in meeting the health care needs of a unique population," says Marko. "Not only did I have to gain confidence as a new graduate in decision making and demonstrate a high level of responsibility and accountability, I had to learn the community's cultural practices and language."

It was here where I began my professional practice in pediatric and medical surgical nursing."

Marko's next position was at a French Canadian community hospital setting; here, she worked with a wealth of health care providers including physicians, registered nurses, registered practical nurses, occupational therapists, dieticians and physiotherapists. She eventually found herself attracted to public health nursing, which seemed worlds away from the hospital environment with which she'd grown so accustomed.

"I was working with people in their homes, seeing students in the schools, doing community health fairs, and working with seniors groups," says Marko. "Here the focus was on health promotion and disease prevention, rather than curative approaches to disease states. I observed and valued the involvement of the individual in their health outcomes. This was powerful to me as a provider of care."

Eventually, Marko returned to Windsor, where community visiting nursing called to her. "Elements of autonomy, proficiency in assessment, confidence in decision making and advocating for patients were essential in providing nursing care to families in their home," explains Marko.

"It was during my employment in visiting nursing that I decided to return to university for further education," she continues. "I experienced great satisfaction as a clinician but wanted to learn more and offer more as a nurse. The nurse practitioner program was

being revived in Ontario and the announcement of a program in Windsor sparked my interest to apply.”

Although “jobs for nurse practitioners early on were extremely scarce,” Marko says that with time and funding models, opportunities for employment became available to her pursue a career as a nurse practitioner.

Marko says that her most memorable moment as a nurse practitioner is “the commitment by the Ministry of Health to endorse and support the role of nurse practitioners as partners in the delivery of health care services, in particular the establishment of Nurse Practitioner Led Clinics.

“When the opportunity of such a clinic was announced in Lakeshore, I was very interested to apply. With the support of my colleague physicians and nurses I was successful in my application, and am now close to three years working with a multidisciplinary team in providing primary health care services to the citizens of Lakeshore.”

Marko’s passion for her work is undeniable. “Be excited with the prospect of caring for people,” she urges those who are interested in entering the field of nursing. “They entrust themselves to you with the confidence that you can make a difference.”