

Department Spotlight:

The Operating Room

Enterprise: (noun) *A company organized for commercial purposes; business firm.*

The OR is like an enterprise,” says Fran Strauss, R.N., director of perioperative services. “It’s big.”

Big it is. The 24/7 operation employs more than 100 staff members and consists of nurses, surgical technicians, perioperative assistants, secretaries, unit clerks, inventory technicians, scheduling coordinators, porters, physician assistants, patient care technicians and ancillary support managers.

Last year, nearly 14,000 inpatient and outpatient cases were performed at South Nassau. And on a given day, all 12 operating rooms, located in the G Wing on the first floor, are typically in use.

Surgeons at South Nassau perform numerous procedures, which can last anywhere from less than 30 minutes to more than two hours, from total hip and knee replacement to neurosurgery and plastic and reconstructive surgery, she said.

Elective surgeries start as early as 7 a.m. and continue until 11 p.m. Because South Nassau is a Level II-designated trauma center, the operating room could be busy throughout the night with on-call cases, she said.

After patients leave the operating room, they recover in the Post-Anesthesia Care Unit (PACU) before they are transferred



Members of the operating room staff, whom Fran Strauss, R.N., director of perioperative services, describes as the “ultimate early risers” are all wide-eyed at 7 a.m. on a recent Friday.

to the Ambulatory Surgical Unit (ASU), where they are discharged home or can stay up to 23 hours. If necessary, patients can also transfer from PACU to an inpatient room.

While health care professionals are tending to the patients, technicians are tending to the operating room and surgical instruments.

As soon as one case

is completed and before another begins, porters have, on average, 30 minutes to “turn space over” or prepare the room for other procedures.

“They are kind of like the pit crew at the Indy 500,” she said. “They have to move pretty quickly.”

After every procedure, perioperative assistants decontaminate and break down the instrument trays and send instruments to Central Supply for sterilization.

“Besides operational efficiency, we must continue to meet and strive to exceed our level of service excellence for our patients, physicians and employees,” she said.