

Critical Concern



Melinda Hendricks-Jones '00
Physician Assistant, Trauma Team
The Toledo Hospital

In the controlled chaos that surrounds trauma surgery at The Toledo Hospital, Melinda Hendricks-Jones carries with her something that she learned from faculty at The University of Findlay: a love of medicine.

Hendricks-Jones, a physician assistant and member of the hospital's trauma team, first started in UF's nuclear medicine program but was interested in the developing health sciences program. She moved into the physician assistant program during her fourth year, and graduated in five years.

Program director Dr. Paul Davis imparted wisdom from his experience as well as a love of the profession. "Even after I've practiced six years, the experience he brought to us remains helpful. It was

great to encounter that kind of love of medicine — it was very motivational," Hendricks-Jones said, also crediting Cindy Bouillon, Ph.D., who taught anatomy and physiology. "We had experiences in the cadaver lab. A lot of us go on to surgical careers, so to have that experience was very beneficial."

As a student, Hendricks-Jones was active in her field, starting the Student Health Advisory Council, which helped Student Health Services put on an annual health fair as well as provided programs on student-

relevant topics such as eating disorders and smoking cessation, and was founding president of both the council and the Health Professions Club.

Faculty helped Hendricks-Jones obtain several internships, but a friend helped her obtain her final internship at The Toledo Hospital, where she worked in trauma services. The internal medicine group sought her out, and after graduation she worked for two years as an internal medicine physician assistant.

She was then recruited for the trauma team, where she will mark five years this May. The nine-story Toledo Hospital, which includes Toledo Children's Hospital, is a Level-1 trauma facility that receives "the worst of the worst" — gunshot wounds, carbon monoxide poisonings, suicides, victims of severe car accidents.

Trauma team members start the day doing rounds on all their in-patient trauma patients, now in intensive care, step-down or even regular units. But the quiet can vanish in an instant.

"You never know what's coming in the door. You get an announcement on your pager, but you don't know until the person comes in the door what to expect," she said.

"During those first few minutes, we have to stabilize. We try to obtain a history if that's possible and do as complete and as quick a physical exam as possible," she said. The team maintains an open airway, gives blood, calls on orthopedic, neurosurgery or vascular specialists as needed, and assists the trauma surgeon if a procedure must be performed.

"It demands on-the-spot critical thinking, because there is almost no time to prepare," Hendricks-Jones said.

The young PA who became the mother of a son, Mason, in May, 2006, feels the pain experienced by her patients' families.

"We see people on the worst day of their lives, and sometimes it's the last day of their lives, which is the hard part. Especially now, being a mother, I find it hard to work with the younger population," she admitted.

Other times, a patient may come in with multiple injuries such as a brain injury and broken bones. "To see them, a few weeks later, leave the hospital and know they are going to have a productive life again, is an amazing event."

"The other plus of working with a trauma service like I do is the closeness with the staff — emergency room staff, operating room staff and floor staff," she said. "We truly work as a team, and provide a group effort to give the patient the best care we can — all with the hope that they will be able to leave the hospital and have a productive life again."

Hendricks-Jones has fond memories of UF, and that's a family affair: She came to Findlay from New Bavaria, Ohio, graduating from Holgate High School, with her twin sister, Lisa Hendricks, who studied criminal justice, graduated in 1999 and is now a lawyer in San Diego, Calif. The pair were helped by a sibling grant that reduced their tuition.

"We both really enjoyed the fact that there was a family atmosphere," Hendricks-Jones said. "Both of us keep in contact with faculty we encountered, and it's six years out now. That's a rare thing you probably wouldn't find at larger universities, and that we are very appreciative of."

"Even after I've practiced six years, the experience he brought to us remains helpful. It was great to encounter that love of medicine-- it was very motivational."

*Melinda Hendricks-Jones, PA '00
(Speaking of UF professor, Dr. Paul Davis)*

