

## National Youth Safety Essay Scholarship Contest Winner

**Katherine Jaszczak**

*Houghton Portage Township Schools*

Bright lights shine through a large white atmosphere of sterile machines along each wall. A rush of air curiously inflated my lungs and was held for a moment, more weightless and freer than the outside world. The atmosphere between the four walls sent a shiver down my spine as if one could feel the many miracles that had taken place on this hallowed ground; and which I soon would experience with my very own eyes. As a Health Careers student, I was given the privilege to shadow physicians in an operating room to see what my future career might look like. Through Health Careers, I learned about the CareerSafe Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) portion of the class. Ensuring that I, a high schooler, was equipped and prepared for the real world that I was about to enter. I particularly enjoyed learning about OSHA standards, which helped me to be prepared for what I might see and come in contact with: a world with consequences and actions involving precious lives. I learned about the key safety protocols that save lives and maintain protection for the provider and provided. These are prominently displayed throughout the hospital, especially in the operating room, including: hand hygiene, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and contact concerns with bloodborne pathogens.

During my shadowing experience with the surgical unit, my first action was to suit up in scrubs and put on my PPE, which includes: boot covers, a hairnet, gloves, and glasses. When I walked into the scrub area, I knew what to expect from OSHA's PPE protocol and why I needed to wear that specific equipment. Realizing from the class that in order to keep the disclosed operating area clean from physical dirt or airborne particles, I saw how boot covers and a hairnet were necessities. From OSHA's Assessment of Bloodborne Pathogens, I was aware PPE is important in protecting the patient and vital in protecting myself from dangerous and extremely serious diseases such as HIV, HBV, and HCV, which are transmitted through contact with bodily fluids. In order to protect from bodily contact, goggles were used in every surgery to shield my eyes and face. I didn't need to be intimidated during my shadowing career. The expectation as an observer or suiting up in equipment was not difficult to initiate for the first time, for I had done my homework and got prepared through OSHA's program. Instead of worrying about how I might need to protect myself from pathogens, I focused on absorbing all of the information I could; any possible chance I could learn, I was able to take. Once I had washed my arms and hands to go into surgery, I took the precautions regarding where to stand and observe. Through the OSHA's Assessment of Avoiding Electrocution Hazards and Walking and Working Surfaces, I knew to watch for danger in my position in the operating room. Through the videos, I learned that accidents happen. In order to prevent future accidents, improvements and implements were conducted to improve the hospital's protocols for staff and patient's safety. A protocol can only go so far, to also help prevent accidents OSHA emphasized the needed observation for cords and slippery surfaces or any dangerous plays that might happen. I watched as the surgeons and their staff carefully protected themselves, each other, and myself. The operating room was filled with a symphony; the workspace danced to the beautifully played music, the musicians perfectly in sync. This heartens me to carefully observe OSHA's standards, as they did. They were able to be a well-oiled machine from the fluidity in knowing OSHA's standards. I am now inspired and will be able to protect myself and others as gracefully as this tight-knit team when I enter the profession.

Being able to observe real-life surgeries has given me critical real-world experience and knowledge that will provide a foundation for my future career in the health field. Learning about safety and protection protocols, via OSHA's CareerSafe course, has built a strong and sturdy foundation for ensuing a health profession as well as protection in my life outside of the hospital. OSHA's information has begun my training on becoming keen on the observation and anticipation of dangerous scenarios. Either in or out of the hospital, it could be a crucial skill that can save a life.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration program has taught me universal life-saving skills and information that I can apply to my everyday life. I can use the safety skills I have learned with my future family and children in preparing their wounds or teaching them to avoid dangerous scenarios. Whether it be at work in the hospital or shadowing in the operating room, CareerSafe's Occupational Safety and Health Administration's class has taught me life-saving skills that I will forever use.

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