

Buoying the spirits



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In the mid 1500s, Gaspare Tagliacozzi was an Italian surgeon who designed a method to reconstruct the nose. He is considered a pioneer of plastic and reconstructive surgery for that work. But I like him best for his philosophy about the patients for whom he cared.

Tagliacozzi said: “We restore, rebuild, and make whole those parts which nature hath given, but which fortune has taken away. Not so much that it may delight the eye, but that it might buoy up the spirit, and help the mind of the afflicted.”

I thought about Tagliacozzi recently when a number of really complex patients with long-standing and large wounds were sent home with healed or closed wounds. Were they “as good as new”? No, but they were as close to whole again as could be hoped for and happy to be able to take part in life once more. They had missed a

lot of the enjoyment of life due to hospital appointments, dressing changes, wraps and stockings, pain, odour and the need to rest the leg or buttocks. We don’t have a bell to ring like the cancer centres do, but the patients and their families were smiling.

We get asked fairly often: how can you do wound care? You look at open wounds all day long? They bleed, smell and never seem to go away. Right, all of that is true, but the joy in the work in getting a patient healed... not so much that it may delight the eye but, in the words of Tagliacozzi: “That it might buoy up the spirit, and help the mind of the afflicted.”

It is the holidays, where I hope you are able to buoy up your spirits, get a break, visit family and friends, and play with kids. The work you do every day to buoy up the spirits of those in your care and the help you provide to the mind of the afflicted is significant work. I am humbled to be among you. **WINT**