



UNH Student Nurse Saves A Life At Exeter Hospital

Media Contact: [Beth Potier](#)

603-862-1566

UNH Media Relations

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Reporters and editors: Nursing student Katherine Boucher can be reached at 603-953-4117 or kmt52@cisunix.unh.edu.

DURHAM, N.H. - The calm, quick reaction of a University of New Hampshire nursing student helped save a patient's life at Exeter Hospital earlier this month.

Katherine Boucher, a junior from Lee, was providing direct care to a post-operative patient during her medical-surgical nursing clinical at Exeter Hospital. She noticed - before the patient did - that the patient was bleeding heavily from his surgical site. Thinking quickly and acting calmly, she attempted to stop the bleeding with some towels that were nearby and instructed the patient to keep pressure on the towels before summoning a professional nurse to assist.

"The patient had an angel watching over him," says Beth Evans, the UNH clinical instructor overseeing Boucher, adding that the bleeding was so heavy that the patient would likely have gone into shock soon without Boucher's care. Such life-or-death scenarios are nearly unheard-of for student nurses, who do not care for critical patients.

"Many students would have run out to get their instructor, which is one right 'answer,'" says UNH associate professor of nursing Sue Fetzer, who teaches the course. "But one of the things I have stressed in this course is setting priorities and making decisions when all the answers are correct. In this case, the best answer was what Katherine did, stopping the bleeding."

"She did exactly what a licensed R.N. would do," Evans adds.

Boucher credits her training as well as instinct with helping her stay calm. "Panicking was not only going to prevent me from thinking clearly, but I was also concerned about getting the patient panicked," says Boucher. "That could have escalated blood pressure and heart rate and made the bleeding worse. It was definitely important to keep myself and the patient calm."

She was so cool-headed, she says, "that the nurse I called told me she thought maybe the patient had just scratched a scab."

As news of Boucher's life-saving work spreads and causes excitement among her classmates, professors, and even the dean of the College of Health and Human Services, Boucher retains that sense of calm. "This is our job," she says of herself and her fellow nursing students. "It's what we're supposed to do. It's very important and obviously the patient involved is very appreciative, but things like this happen every day. We're lucky to have had this experience to learn about it."

"I'm really grateful to be at Exeter Hospital," she adds. "The nurses there are really wonderful with students."

Boucher, daughter of Phil and Penny Boucher of Lee and a graduate of Oyster River High School in Durham, has been in UNH's highly competitive nursing program since she was a

freshman. She hopes to become a nurse-midwife.

The patient, who was returned to surgery to repair the wound, is now recovering - again in Boucher's care.

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a New England liberal arts college and a major research university with a strong focus on undergraduate-oriented research. A land, sea and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling 11,800 undergraduate and 2,400 graduate students.

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