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2016 Nursing Essay Contest Winners

Nursing Commitment - Marika Chunyk

I remain in nursing because I believe I make a difference. I currently work in the cardiovascular intensive care unit (CVICU), and as a nurse I recover patients after open heart surgery, or valve replacements. These patients get a new lease on life, and are able to change their lifestyles, and enjoy many more years. We get cards, flowers, candy, and visits from previous patients and their families thanking us for our care that we provided to them; however the progress and smiles of the previous patients is the best gift any nurse can ask for. Cardiovascular patients are hard to take care of, and decisions need to be made promptly to save their life, and manage their care. As a cardiovascular nurse I trained hard, work hard, and collaborate with a great team in CVICU. Some patients do not recover after surgery, or have complications and that can be hard to deal with. I feel like the majority of the cardiovascular patients are grateful that surgery was available for them, and they work hard to recover. These patients now have more time for their families, activities, and often a new outlook on life. I am able to teach patients about how to live a healthy lifestyle, manage their health problems, and to evaluate their progress. I remain in nursing because these patients need us to not only lead by example, but teach them, advocate for them, and encourage them to live as healthy as possible. Cardiac issues are frightening to most people. As a cardiac nurse I am able to provide emotional support to patients and families faced with life threatening conditions. Nurses are responsible for patient education, and for making sure the patient understands what the doctor tells them. We have meaningful interactions with our patients, and we often become attached to the patients and their families. I always have tried to treat every patient as if they were my own family member. We work as a team in CVICU, and we work hard to encourage our patients in order for them to have the best outcome possible. A team approach is good because we all have the same goals and the patient's best interest at heart.

A caring and compassionate nurse is considered as a guardian angel by patients. I do not believe that nurses are always angels; however, we strive to provide the best care we can for each patient. Nursing can be a very satisfying, and gratifying career for the compassionate. As a nurse I have learned that it takes compassion and patience because patients and families are in their worst state. It is up to us as nurses to help our patient become their best. I am continuing my education as family nurse practitioner and I plan to work with the underserved population in Nevada. I remain in nursing to help those in need, and those that do not have access to medical care. I believe it is important to help our community, and to strive to be the best in all that we do. I remain in nursing because there is no other career that is as rewarding and fulfilling as nursing. I am able to go home after work, knowing that what I did all day truly mattered. Nursing allows me to gain new perspectives, and by making changes in our community, we can start to make changes in the world.

Passion for the Profession - Lori Winchell, DrPH, APRN-BC

Change provides the opportunity to reflect and grow. Such was the case when I was packing the last few boxes for my parents move to a Las Vegas retirement community. Moving boxes filled with childhood memories surrounded me. Memories such as sitting next to my dad in a surgery suite and pumping the black bag filled with ether to anesthetize a patient having an appendectomy—I was seven years old and this was before HIPPA and OSHA. I grew up in surgery locker rooms listening to medical cases, going on house calls, and making hospital rounds with my dad. I even earned my first paycheck working as a medical assistant at the age



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of thirteen. My father retired only, to continue as a volunteer training nurse anesthetists, medical students and residents worldwide in places such as the Philippines, China, and South America. He turned in his medical license at the age of 82.

Surrounded by bubble wrap, tape and boxes, the difference between the art of medicine and the business of medicine became clear. My father, a World War 2 Veteran in the 82nd airborne took the witnessed loss of life and used his GI bill to learn how to heal, became a physician. My dad did not teach about increasing patient numbers or patient financial transactions. He taught me the art of medicine as a combination of knowledge, skills, and creativity, intertwined to affect a patient's wellbeing and promote healing.

Healing and wellbeing is multilevel. It is an intuitive sense of what the patient needs beyond the immediate medical problem. It is the potential act of healing the whole person. Each time I enter an exam room I try to listen with intuition and develop a sense of what the needs of the patient may be. Intuition is not a spiritual product rather it is the act of empowerment. In the physical sense a patient may need a medication or procedure. However, intuitive healing encompasses the whole person and not just the immediate and may be as simple acceptance without judging, respect, or providing self-esteem by giving a patient the right to choose his or her care, or perhaps allowing the patient to reach into their faith through their prayer. The art of medicine is to provide the opportunity to each patient to maximize their healing process and to work toward the goal of wellbeing. Recognizing that healing and wellbeing is multilevel and encompasses the whole person. I have found that the practice of intuitive healing contributes to positive patient outcomes and increases patient satisfaction as reflected in feedback by improved patient outcomes, patient satisfaction surveys.

The most empowering experiences I have had, is to work with patients diagnosed with long term chronic conditions such as diabetes, obesity, heart disease, TBI, addictions intertwined mental health concerns and compounded by their economic and social struggles. Each patient contact offers the opportunity to share skills and support, so the patient can initiate their unique process of multilevel healing and wellbeing. I feel fortunate that my employers have placed me in a position to assist patients through the process of a complex medical system to obtain the care needed.

The opportunity to assist patients may be through provision of direct patient as a Nurse Practitioner, as a co-facilitator for a Healthy Living class to Veterans, a TEACH class for Health Care providers, or participating in change process such a policy change, or developing community partnerships for improved patient outcomes. I have practiced as an RN/APRN since 1974 and have never once considered a different profession. The challenges motivated continued professional growth that resulted in obtained my Doctorate in Public Health at the age of 59. The profession of Nursing offers the opportunity to design your own practice. I have worked in a variety of healthcare settings: College Health; rural health; a county jail, county outpatient clinic, with Veterans, and as an educator in a University setting. All of these experiences have enriched my personal life, helped me grow into better person, and have given value to the importance of being part of a larger community.

Why I Remain in Nursing - Evangeline S. Vida

Some days, nursing can be a thankless profession. Nurses work long hours, doing more with less, and often missing out on regular breaks. Nurses are self-less, often putting the needs of others before their own. Most nurses do not go into nursing because of the pay but because of their desire to care for others. I have been a nurse for 25 years and throughout those years, I have accumulated a melting pot of experiences. I remain in nursing not only because I am



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passionate about helping people but also because nursing is a career that allows me to cultivate myself into the kind of nurse I want to be. Nursing allows me to explore a variety of areas where I can grow as a person and as a nurse. I remain in nursing because it is never “boring” – you can branch out into a variety of areas in the nursing field, thus transforming yourself with each new experience.

When I graduated from nursing school, I was excited and scared to start my nursing career. I knew that I did not acquire everything I needed to learn to help prepare me for the “real world.” My focus as a new nurse was to learn all the skills required of me so I could provide the best care for my patients. I worked on a medical-surgical ward for a Veterans Administration Medical Center in Tacoma, Washington. It was a challenging and rewarding job as I cared for our nation’s veterans. I had a great preceptor who took me under her wings and nurtured me until I could “fly” on my own. I was lucky to have had a preceptor who was dedicated and passionate about nursing. Looking back, I feel my first preceptor out of nursing school instilled in me the kind of nurse I wanted to be – compassionate, dedicated, great work ethics, and a wonderful patient advocate.

After I left the Veterans Administration, I returned home to Guam, where I worked initially as a nurse on a Medical-Telemetry ward at the only local hospital on the island. I learned a lot while working on that ward, especially about cardiac diagnoses and drugs! What I love about nursing and why I choose to stay in nursing is that I am ALWAYS learning something new. Nursing is a profession that requires constant learning - you cannot allow yourself to become “stagnant”, because healthcare is constantly in a state of flux.

Eventually I left the hospital and worked as a family practice clinic nurse – again, this was a new environment for me, so it was another opportunity for me to learn and grow from the experience. While working in the clinic, I worked two other part-time jobs – one was as a certified nursing assistant instructor for a community college and the other was as a diabetic health educator. I later transitioned from the family practice clinic to the ambulatory surgery clinic where I worked as the surgical coordinator and later became the recovery room nurse. I enjoyed my time in the surgery clinic because I was able to go into the operating room when needed to assist with intravenous sedation or positioning patients on the table. Ultimately, I felt like I learned all I could from the surgery clinic and I was “itching” for something more. I was not feeling challenged any longer so I surprised myself – I joined the Air Force (AF).

Joining the AF was the best thing I could do for my nursing career. The AF exposed me to nursing in the military. As an AF nurse, I worked in family practice, the emergency room, the trauma room while deployed, and the flight medicine clinic. Working in the ER/trauma room while deployed to Afghanistan was the BEST nursing experience I have ever had! It was scary, but looking back, it was all worth it. I was also given the opportunity during another deployment, to work with a company to develop an online electronic version of a deployment waiver application. As the nurse on the “team”, I provided valuable input that allowed the IT Company to create an electronic form that provided the information required to process waiver applications.

What other careers can you think of that will allow you to dabble in so many different areas? Each new area I work in ignites a new passion for my profession because I am constantly learning something new. Whether I am taking care of patients in a clinic, an ER, a trauma room, or working in an office as a case manager, I know that I am making a difference in the lives of my patients while growing as a person and as a nurse – and THAT, is why I remain in nursing.