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#### **Author**

Koovada, Phillip, BSN, RN

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# Finding the “RIGHT FIT”

By Phillip Koovada RN, BSN

Searching for the perfect career is strenuous. Many attributes have to be accounted for: personality, skills, passion etcetera. It's relative to the children's story “Goldilocks and the Three Bears.” In the story after repeated trials, Goldilocks is able to find the ideal conditions that are just right for her, from which porridge to eat to the bed she felt was suitable for her. Similarly, professionals search for specific characteristics that fit their needs, such as a positive work climate or a specific psychosocial atmosphere that is just right. For me, the right fit needed to include a positive work climate, the gift of making a difference, and a good salary. These simple characteristics served as my guide while searching for my professional career path. After sometime I thought this mystical profession was impossible without compromise. I was one of those undergraduates that went from undeclared to almost every major in the course catalog. Finally, I found nursing to have the characteristic I so longed for. When I finally decided on nursing as my major, I had a one-track mind that was only focused on graduating and getting a job. I believed that when I got hired onto a unit, it would automatically possess those required characteristics; well that's not the truth.

Sadly in nursing school, we are only provided with a brief introduction into different units. New graduate nurses have better luck shooting darts in the dark when it comes to choosing the right unit for them. The journey to find the perfect unit can be comparable to finding someone with heterochromia iridis, daunting without the right tools and knowledge.

Many nurses choose a unit on a whim. Unfortunately, many find that what they pick isn't the ideal place where they can showcase their true abilities. It is found that nurses change specialties at least once a career. Some nurses enter a specialty only to find it's not a right fit for them. Some also switch to pursue a new interest, advance their career, move to a work schedule or environment that suits them better, or move to make more money. A study in the American Journal of Nursing, found that 13% of newly licensed RNs had changed principal jobs after one year, and 37% reported that they felt ready to change jobs (Kovner et al 2007).

A staff nurse introduced the concept of rotating new graduate nurses in 2009 for her CN3 project, a professional development project for UCSD's nursing career ladder. Through teaching in UCSD New Graduate Residency Program — a program facilitated to aid the transition for new graduates — the staff nurse learned that some of the new grads were experiencing anxiety regarding the type of unit they choose when they were first hired. The staff nurse then sent out surveys to nurses throughout the organization to gather data regarding the



**Phillip Koovada RN, BSN**, graduated from the University of St. Francis and was selected to start his career at UCSD in the New Graduate Rotation Program. He now works as a preceptor, resource and charge nurse within a telemetry unit. Phillip currently is pursuing his MSN/MSHCA to further his education and someday lead his peers.

topic that working in “the right place” according to our skills, personality and interests can help nurses feel more confident and satisfied with their jobs. After analysis of these surveys, they found that nurses wanted the chance to experience what it is really like working in different units before deciding to be hired in a specific unit. Therefore, two intentions developed: the first (root) intention of the NGRP was to allow nurses the ability to experience different units in order to identify a unit they felt was a “good fit” for them. The second intention allowed the intuition the ability to continue a pipeline of new nurses into the organization when turnover and vacancy rates were low. Ultimately, this program allowed managers to





hire new graduates into this program when positions were non-existent.

When I found that the University of San Diego Medical Center had an open position in the New Graduate Nurse Rotation Program, (NGRP) I immediately applied. I knew that I liked the Emergency Department, but I wasn't sure it was the right fit for me. This program seemed the best path for me to test the waters as a staff nurse and identify a unit that would be the best fit. I interviewed, and was offered a position. The first day of NGRP orientation was terrifying. Opening statement from one manager was "you are the cream of the crop, this program is not going to be easy (boy was she right), we had over 900 applicants and we only choose you 6, expectations are high. Just to let you know..." Instantly the room went dark. What did I get myself into? I thought to myself. Is this program for me? And as if nothing else existed I was looking at myself with complete and utter regret for not taking the at UCLA. Then like a 6 a.m. wake up call, a high pitched voiced in a far distance brought me back to reality,



"Philip are you still with us." I immediately began to focus my attention to the nurse educator who began to go through an overview of the program.

The program consisted of three units that participants would rotate between: a high turnover Medical/Surgical unit that's primary population was orthopedic patients, an Oncology/BMT unit

with patients receiving chemotherapy and stem cells and a Telemetry floor with a mixed population of cystic fibrosis, seizures and post op cardiac patients. We were provided with four months of orientation and after completion, we had the ability to apply for open positions or remain in the float pool rotating between the units.

On my first day on a the unit, I can still remember a multitude of mixed feelings: excitement of the unknown, the fear of making a mistake, and happiness that after all the school work and countless hours of studying, I no longer was a student, I was actually a Registered Nurse! The first couple of weeks I felt like a deer caught in the headlights, and right about the time I started to get the hang of everything, my rotation was over and I was on to the next unit. Back to square one. I thought to myself. Though the core nursing principals were the same, every unit had their own flow, personalities and protocols that were indigenous to each unit. Learning the ins and outs of each unit was tedious and tough. Nevertheless by the end of my third

rotation, I learned so much about myself, and started to feel more confident in my nursing capabilities. Sooner than later, I came to the revelation of what unit aligned with my core personality and shared values. I was no longer fearful of certain populations; I developed relationships

throughout the hospital and felt a true purpose when I came into work.

After completion of the 4-month orientation program, the other nurses in the program and I quickly realized that this program is definitely not for every new graduate. A specific candidate is needed to succeed in the program. Due to the intensity and amount of knowledge required from the new graduate nurses, the program demands the participant to come equipped with critical skills to adapt quickly. Connecting and discussing trials and tribulations with fellow participants helped us become stronger which in return helped us to persevere through the struggles of the program. We all knew the program was grueling compared to orientation to one unit. But after the storm had passed, we became well-rounded nurses, versatile and confident to handle any situation.

The NGRP allows nurses to experience different units in order to find the "best fit" for them, and also allows the organization to continue to hire new graduate nurses when vacancy and turnover rates are low. Through evaluation and analysis of surveys, the NGRP produces strong, confident, well-rounded nurses. It also continues to be an evolving process, assessing, implementing and evaluating outcomes. Ultimately UCSD wants to expand this program to all units, to provide all new nurses the opportunity to find their own heterochromia iridis or "the perfect fit", where the climate, population, skills and personalities of a specific unit are similar to their own. This harmonious relationship will provide UCSD with happy nurses that will continue to grow and strive for excellence in return.

I am constantly reminded of a quote I read in undergraduate school by Charles Darwin, "A man who dares waste one hour of time has not discovered the value of life." I am a product of this program and would not have changed my decision, and frankly, I didn't waste any time. I tested the waters, just like Goldilocks did, and selected a unit that aligns with my philosophy of nursing and posses the professional characteristics I so longed for.