

## **UC San Diego**

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My Inspiration into the Awesome World of Nursing

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# My Inspiration into the Awesome World of Nursing

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Born in Wisconsin, I am the daughter of a chemist and a caregiver who cultivated an intellectually vibrant and loving home. While my dad dove deep into molecules and research, my mom, a Registered Nurse (RN), treated burn victims. She poured her heart into her patients and exhaled fulfillment as she passed through the door returning home. My mom, my inspiration, influenced the healer I would become. She is the reason I embarked on a journey towards cardiovascular research, but landed in this unique, healing world of nursing.

Growing up, I carried my backpack in the halls of Catholic schools, which taught me the virtues of morality, compassion, and honesty. Unsure of my calling, yet fascinated by science and psychology, I earned my biology degree and began conducting cardiovascular research at the Medical College of Wisconsin. I marveled at the wondrous frontiers of scientific research, but I was unsettled. I was not drawn to follow in the footsteps of my mentors in the lab. Something felt missing. While reflecting, my mother suffered a sudden, tragic accident. In a coma for three months, she lay on a hospital bed with me perched at her side. At the hospital, I observed an astonishing difference in the care various nurses provided. Some nurses sought to heal, and others focused more on executing tasks. I could tell the difference between the two nursing styles.

One day, a nurse and his assistant entered to change the bed linen. I vividly recall watching them briskly roll my mother from side to side, eager to complete a menial task, but not taking

care to protect Mom's arms or legs which flailed back and forth, even hitting the bed rails. Her body never appeared so lifeless to me—utterly helpless. Just like that: it clicked. I needed to share my empathy, compassion, and my capacity for connection with the world. Resolving to become the nurse I wished for my mother, I enrolled at a technical college to earn registered nursing degree while helping care for my mom, who suffered irreparable brain damage.

My nursing experience has developed over 17 years, with the last 15 devoted to UC San Diego's psychiatric unit. I am privileged to work collaboratively with esteemed attendings, residents, and nurses to treat a population comprised largely of low-income, underprivileged individuals. I receive deep, personal satisfaction from this clinical work finding purpose in advocating for marginalized voices whose impairment often masks their needs.

The longer I practice nursing, the more passionate and inquisitive I



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graduated from UW-Whitewater with Biology Degree & Chemistry Minor in 2000 where she belonged to Golden Key National Honor Society and Order Of Omega Greek Honor Society. She worked at the Medical College of Wisconsin conducting cardiovascular research for three years prior to returning to school for nursing. She graduated with her Associates Degree in Nursing in 2005 from Milwaukee Area Technology College and began working at a psychiatric nurse at Rogers Memorial Hospital in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She started travel nursing in 2007, arriving to my first destination of San Diego, California and never left. She has been with UCSDH since 2008, working on NBMU, with the best team of nurses, a phenomenal nurse manager who is hands on and endlessly supportive, an amazing medical director, and a patient population that she receives a great deal of satisfaction serving.

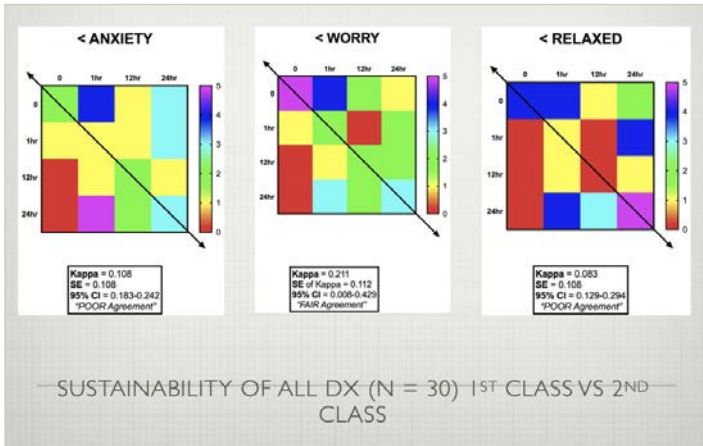


Figure 1. Heat Map presenting results of factors of Gad 6-consisting of Factors of Feeling: Anxiety, Worry, feeling Relaxed.

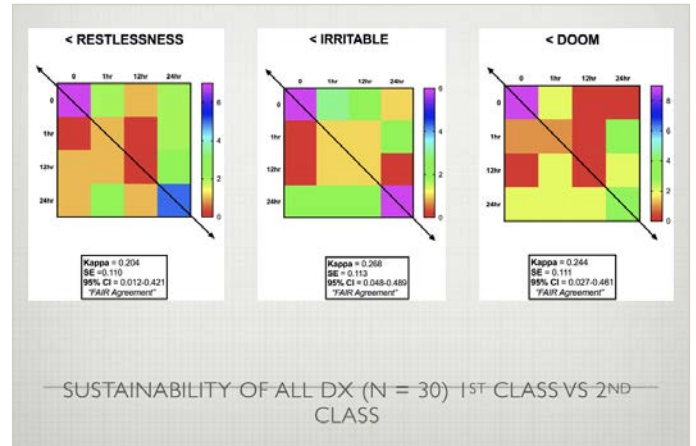


Figure 2. Heat Map presenting results of factors of Gad 6-consisting of Factors of Feeling: Restless, Irritable, Doom.

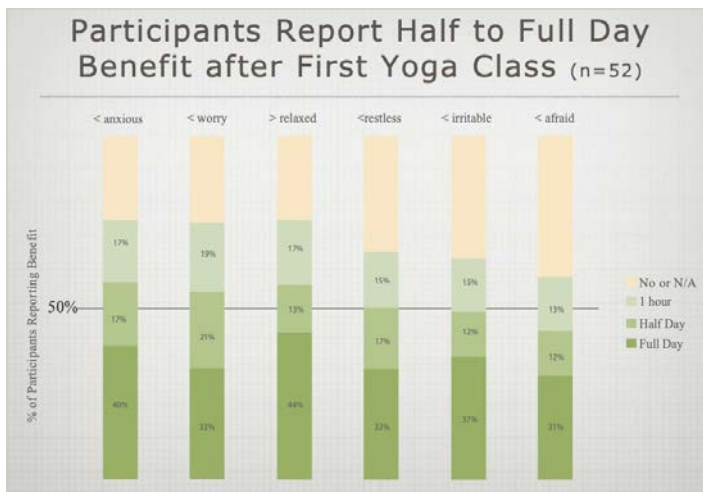


Figure 3. Sustainability of reported benefits 24-hr after yoga class. Half of participants (n=52) reported half day to full day benefit after the 1st yoga class for the symptoms less anxiety, less worry, and more relaxed.

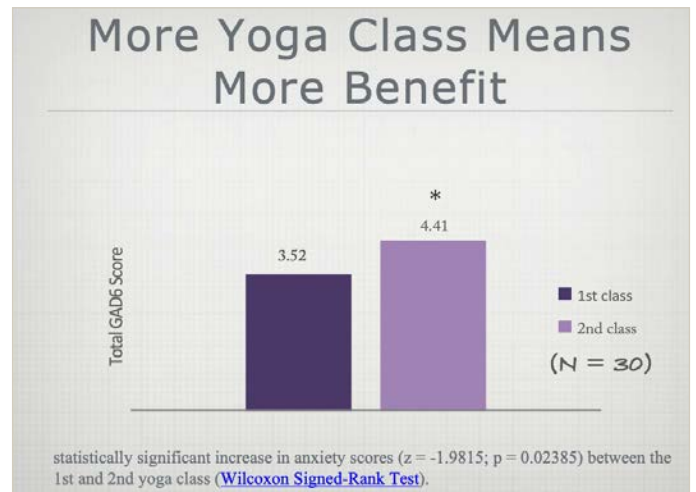


Figure 4. Total anxiety score and sustainability: first yoga class versus second yoga class.

become. Curious of the impact incomplete psychiatric admission assessments might play on length of hospitalization and recidivism, I teamed up with a colleague to research this question. This was my first foray into nursing research.

During this time another topic which I would become very passionate, surfaced. My colleague and I both felt limited in the treatment we could offer patients suffering from anxiety. We noticed a paradigm, that medications are the primary treatment and while there is an undeniable significant benefit gained from medications, they

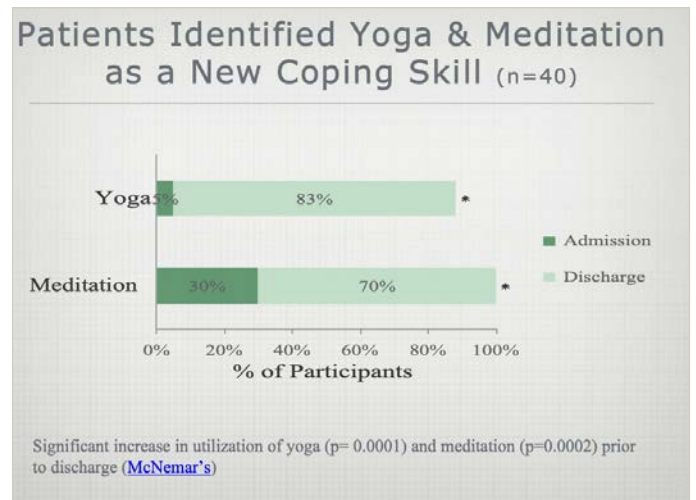


Figure 5. Utilization of yoga and meditation as coping skills on admission versus prior to discharge.

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transitioned the shared governance meeting from a report-out structure to a more actionable, problem-solving meeting. With my leadership experience in CPC and Nursing Cabinet, I was asked to be the inaugural Chair of a new interfacility shared governance council between UC Irvine Health (UCI) and UCSDH, the UCI/UCSD Shared Nursing Governance Council. This council's goal was to work together to create efficiencies within our shared charting system, EPIC.

After working as a bedside leader for many years, with the support and encouragement of my colleagues, I felt empowered to take the next step into leadership and applied for a position as an assistant nurse manager. I felt like this transition would help me become a better advocate for my bedside team and took the chance to step out of my comfort zone. I gained a lot of experience as a bedside leader and knew that my time working with my interdisciplinary peers across UCSDH and UCI prepared me to step into my current role as the assistant nurse manager on Thornton 2 West. Luckily, my 2 West team took a chance on me in 2021 and I have had the pleasure of working with them since then. Together we have been able to create change, improve recognition, and increase our patient and staff satisfaction. By sharing my story, I hope that I can inspire others to collaborate and contribute to the successes of our organization. I am so proud to be a UCSDH nurse and look forward to continuing to model the way for my UCSDH team for years to come.

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do not come without consequences, particularly when considering the population of patients suffering a comorbidity of addiction, or those patients so firmly averse to accepting medications or are medication resistant. Medication resistance and non-adherence are significant problems observed within this population, which greatly alters the quality of life for those tormented by this illness.

This fueled a fervor to dissuade developing an archetype of a quick fix, go-to solution of “taking a pill” as an easy fix to the ever-growing symptoms of anxiety. Enthusiastic to deliver more tools to patients suffering from addiction, and galvanized to offer alternative coping skills to aid patients in managing their symptoms, I worked with a colleague to research yoga as an adjunct therapy to manage anxiety in our patient population. This included a trifecta of treatment modalities: deep breathing, meditation and yoga stretching to be offered three times a week by a yoga instructor. With a lack of resources, we improvised: one day of teaching by a licensed yoga instructor, one day by my colleague - an RN and licensed yoga instructor - and the third day taught by myself, an avid yoga fan.

My colleague and I had done extensive biomedical and cardiovascular research respectively, but were absolute novices in this type of research. We therefore sought council from UCSDH Scientist, Dr. Judy Davidson, who imparted her wealth of

knowledge into our project. We also called upon one of our medical directors Dr. Vanessa Lauzon and a medicine resident Dr. Priti Ojha.

We were astounded at the spirited participation we received, from even the most unlikely of candidates, from the most robust assaultive patients to the very acutely psychotic. We received great feedback on our yoga program: “I never thought yoga could help me” and “this is the only time I feel peace in my head”.

Our study was published in Archives of Psychiatric Nursing entitled *East meets west in psychiatry: Yoga as an adjunct therapy for management for Anxiety*. Finally, after our hard work and proven results, our manager hired a licensed yoga instructor to offer yoga twice a week as an adjunct treatment modality! Years later, yoga remained part of the psychiatric units' curriculum prior to COVID taking its toll (Figures 1-5).

This project inspired me to seek more knowledge: I returned to school to earn my BSN. I continue to cherish the opportunity to educate and equip the next generation of nurses to deliver the care I wished for my mom. I don't know what the future holds, but I do know I appreciate the opportunity to serve the psychiatric population, to be in this awesome profession of nursing, and to be working alongside such a supportive team!