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# MEDICAL SURGICAL NURSES: Who we are

By Cristina Cazares-Machado, RN BS & Michelle Duong, RN BSN OCN

The medical/surgical division spans both campuses of the UCSD Health System. It consists of 9 units with a total of 217 beds accounting for over 38% of UCSD's current total bed capacity. Its varying areas of specialty and diverse group of dedicated, professional staff committed to delivering the highest quality patient care help drive who we are collectively.

Individual unit areas of specialty range from bone marrow transplant/oncology, care of stroke patients, orthopedics, chronic diseases, solid organ transplant to infectious diseases with some having telemetry monitoring capabilities.

Our staff ranges from the novice practitioners to seasoned nurses. Their level of expertise at the bedside is best illustrated by their commitment to lifelong learning, professional development, and their community.

## COMMITMENT TO PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Unit	BSN	MSN	# RNs	%
5W (includes CNII supervisors)	26	0	46	57%
6E	30	0	36	83%
6W	32	1	36	92%
8th	26	1	37	73%
10E (includes CNII supervisors)	37	3	42	95%
11W	19	1	26	77%
2W	57	1	68	85%
3W	44	2	49	94%
3E	29	0	40	73%
Med Surg	300	9	380	81%



**Michelle Duong, RN, BSN**, graduated from Montana State University in 1998 with the BSN degree. She started working at UCSD in January of 2006 and currently is the nurse manager of the BMT/Oncology unit. Michelle loves being a nurse, a mentor and a teacher.



**Cristina Cazares Machado, RN, BS**, graduated from CSU, Chico in 2000 with a BS in Health Science. She then returned to school at Monterey Peninsula College and obtained her AS in Nursing in 2005. She began working at UCSD in February of 2010 and is currently the Nurse Manager of 6 East, a Medical/Surgical unit with a primary focus on infectious diseases.

# We Salute

To highlight the unique experience of the medical/surgical nurse, three RNs from varying home departments have shared their personal stories about nursing and being a part of the UCSD team.

## Lessons Learned In My First Year As A Nurse



By Anthony Velasco, BSN RN  
PHN CMSRN (6 East)  
2011 Co-Rookie of the Year

My learning as nurse did not stop after graduation. Every day, I am molded into the nurse that I want to be. After nearly three years since starting my career as a nurse, I continue to learn new things. I also realized that nursing is a life-long learning process and is not only contained in books. More importantly, I recognized that learning could root from a myriad of places.

### BE A SPONGE.

Constantly, we are surrounded by seasoned nurses whose knowledge and experiences can only broaden a new grad nurse's mind. I learned to take the opportunity to absorb as much as I could each day I work alongside these nurses. They taught me things as simple as starting an IV to understanding life-long lessons such as "there are no dumb questions", "when you see a problem, be part of the solution", and "it doesn't get easier, you just get better in handling difficult situations".

### BE YOUR PATIENTS' BEST ADVOCATE.

In my first year as a nurse, I learned

quickly the power of nursing and the effect we have on our patients. By empowering our patients through education, we are able to encourage them in participating in their own care and equip them with the proper tools they will need to succeed after discharge. Nurses being present at the bedside 24/7 give us a great vantage point to determine the barriers our patients face. We must seize every opportunity and use our influence in ensuring our patients' successes.

"There is no 'I' in Nursing... unless you are trying to win a spelling bee". Someone once told me that joke; and, as funny as that joke was, I realized that it brought home a simple truth: teamwork is essential in nursing.

During my first year of nursing, I realized the importance of teamwork. More importantly, the teamwork I learned went beyond the traditional definition of being able to depend on each other. The sense of teamwork I learned is teamwork in its purest sense: having a mutual respect, acknowledging differences, and working towards a common objective. Without teamwork, I wouldn't have succeeded in my growth as a nurse.

### BE INVOLVED.

Through my volunteering experiences, I learned the core of the nursing

profession: caring. I learned that nursing and the care nurses provide can break down many barriers. It taught me to listen not only to the words spoken but also appreciate the connection between the caregiver and patient. My recent medical mission to Honduras not only brought me great experiences but also was a testament of how the nursing profession empowered me as a person and as an engaged citizen of the world.

### BE SELF-REFLECTIVE.

Finally, I learned that in order to grow as a nurse, one must self-reflect on a regular basis. We must have the initiative to ask ourselves, "What can I do better?" By understanding where our limitations lie, we can work towards breaking those limitations and expand our horizons.

Despite the chronic fear of inflicting harm, the nagging anxiety of my new career, and the exhaustion of a long day's work, every day I acquire a handful more sense of purpose and satisfaction. Yes, my first year of nursing was terrifying, but being surrounded by supportive, caring, and an inspiring group of nurses made my transition from being a novice nurse to being a competent and professional one very satisfying. Never would I imagine starting as a new RN somewhere else other than on 6 East.

2 West







Elizabeth Brennan, RN  
2012 Rookie of the Year (2 West)

I started my journey as a new graduate nurse at UC San Diego Health System in October of 2010. I was fortunate enough to be hired into the New Graduate Rotation Program (NGRP). This included the opportunity to rotate to three different units at Thornton Hospital, which included telemetry, medical-surgical, and oncology. Being a part of this rotation program as a novice nurse was both challenging and exciting. It involved hours of study both inside and outside of the hospital, and was physically and mentally demanding. However being chosen out of over 1,500 new graduate nurse candidates to be part of the UCSD team was not something I took lightly. I knew that I would have to excel if I wanted to uphold the standards of being a nurse at UCSD.

UCSD has the core values of quality, caring, integrity, creativity, and teamwork. I pride myself in the nursing care that I provide to my patients,



3 East

and work to uphold each one of these core values during my daily patient interactions. In the past 22 months at UCSD, I have become involved in the monthly staff meetings, as well as the Unit-Based Practice Council. I have taken an active role in mentoring new nurses and have precepted several nursing students and externs, including one that was just recently hired into the NGRP - Cohort III. I am the unit representative for the Diabetes Committee, and have also taken part in one of our unit's leadership roles as "Resource Nurse". During our journey to achieve Magnet recognition, I was our unit's Magnet Champion who helped lead our team to Magnet success. I enjoy playing an integral part in unit activities. This involvement contributes to cohesiveness on our floor as well as better patient outcomes and satisfaction.

In early 2012, I was invited to attend a commemorative gathering to celebrate those at UCSD who hit their 6-month, one-year, and two-year milestones as a UCSD employee. We had the chance to meet with

fellow "rookies" and hear about the many accomplishments that UCSD had made in recent news. Margarita Baggett, CNO, commented on the success of obtaining Magnet designation in December, 2011. She explained what it really means to be an employee at UCSD. I listened to accounts from managers about their staff who contribute to the daily patient success stories. At the end of the celebration, they nominated three "Rookies-of-the-Year", who stood as an example of stellar nursing care and commitment to the UCSD system. I had the privilege of being chosen for this prestigious award.

Being nominated as Rookie-of-the-Year was not only an ultimate honor and personal achievement, but it has helped me to push harder every day to provide the superior quality care that UCSD patients deserve. Using UC San Diego's Professional Practice Model to provide patient and family-centered care, I focus on professional values and professional relationships such as peer review and interdisciplinary collaboration. The Rookie-of-the-Year nomination has shown me that I am succeeding at upholding that standard of care as a UCSD nurse. I plan to continue my journey at UC San Diego Health System, and grow both personally and professionally.



6 East

# An Interview



Martha Esser, RN OCN (3 West)

## 1. How long have you been an oncology/BMT nurse? And why Oncology Nursing?

I have been an oncology nurse for approximately 31 years. I have been a BMT nurse for 18 years. I was introduced to BMT when the program was moved from Hillcrest to Thornton. Nurses with oncology experience were encouraged to float to BMT as there was a need. I was very interested because, at the time, my brother-in-law had been diagnosed with leukemia and was going through a sibling-allogeneic transplant, my husband being the donor. I had a vested interest in learning everything so I could help my family through this process.

## 2. What draws you to this specialty?

I am drawn to this specialty for several reasons. First is the patients themselves. I get to take care of a very special group of people. Generally, patients diagnosed with cancer are kind, thoughtful, sweet, and very, very appreciative. Long term relationships are formed; true bonds are formed between patients, their families and friends, and their care givers. Secondly, working with cancer is very challenging, and I do like a challenge. Cancer is smart. There is no cure. One is learning each and every day. You are motivated

to learn new therapies, new protocols so you can take better care of your patient. Last but not least, I am drawn to this specialty because of the people I work with, the other health care professionals who share the same interest, motivation, and love of oncology and BMT.

## 3. What are some of the most memorable patient interactions that you still remember?

Please share them.

I have many memorable patient interactions. I have developed true friendships with the patients I have cared for. I know I have made a difference. Patients trust their nurses, and such, patients will ask their nurse those hard to answer questions. I remember once being called into a room by a patient and her husband; this patient was end of life. She knew it and her husband knew it, but the doctors were not forth coming. My patient told me she had to ask me a tough question and she wanted the absolute truth. She asked, "Am I dying?". After thoughtful consideration, I said yes; she thanked me; both her and her husband hugged me. This patient was discharged home that day and died a few days later. I am still in contact with her husband. I remember watching a patient at end of life, he was dying; his family was present. They were distraught and did not know what to do. I suggested moving the patient over in bed so his wife could lie down with him and hold him. Tearfully she asked me if this

would hurt her husband; I told her that it would not. She climbed in bed and held her husband as he died; and she thanked me for this. I have memories of many, many long conversations with patients and families; just talking about life, mine included. My patients have also helped me; encouraging me to talk; offering me advice and encouragement. BMT is a two way street, patients and nurses both helping each other.

## 4. What would you would like nurses from different departments at UCSD to know about nurses on 3 West?

3W is a very special unit to work on. We work as a family as we support, encourage, and depend on one another. The nurses truly help one another out. It is not uncommon to hear someone say "What can I do for you?," "How can I help?" or "I'll get that for you". Real friendships have been formed on the unit; loving caring friendships that extend beyond the work place. As a family, we support one another through marriage, birth of a child, divorce, and death of a loved one. We lean on one another not only at work, but from home. We cry collectively when we lose a patient and we rejoice when a patient is cancer free. We stand up for one another through the good and the bad. We encourage one another; whether it is to join ONS, or obtain OCN, a bachelor degree, or NP. We support each other as a family does; we laugh, fight, argue and love. And we are all committed to this very special group of patients.

3 West

