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Reflections from 10E New Graduates

by Monica Neslage, MSN, RN, Nicole Miram, MSN, RN and Lee Moreira, BSN, RN

It is often said, “It’s not the destination that matters but the journey;” for what makes you who you are but the people and experiences you encounter along the way. It is also said, “When life hands you lemons, make lemonade;” because if you can’t find the good in everything, you will be perpetually miserable. In many ways, you could say these proverbs personify the life of a nurse. Being a new grad on a unit like 10 East two years ago exemplified the meaningfulness in these proverbs even more. It was during this time that 10 East was going through a whole new identity change of new management, new staff, and a shift in patient population. Now, two years later, three new graduate nurses share their experience of being brand new nurses at UCSD, how shared governance grounded them on a solid foundation, and the pearls of wisdom they’ve learned along the way.

EMOTIONAL ROLLERCOASTER

Monica recalls the flood of emotions after being offered the job at UCSD: “Starting as a new graduate RN at UCSD Medical Center, I experienced all phases of emotions from panic and shock followed by excitement and anticipation. As far as first jobs go, I felt that I had hit the jackpot obtaining a position on a telemetry unit, an area of nursing I was always interested in.”

Lee describes that inner voice that can often be overwhelming: “I remember when I started as a new grad in July 2011; I had mixed feelings and emotions. I had butterflies in my stomach on the first day and was so anxious, doubting myself and if I was capable. I worried about getting the acceptance of the others nurses

and co-workers on the unit.”

Nicole adds, “When I was offered a job at UCSD on the telemetry floor, I could barely fathom how lucky I was; the job almost seemed too good to be true. As my start date approached, I could only envision a job that I would soon find out couldn’t be further from what I expected.”

WALKING INTO THE UNKNOWN

Monica: “The unknown is always a little frightening, and as most first days go, I saw so much, learned so many new things, met so many new people, that it all went by in a blur. One thing I am thankful for is being hired along with two other new graduates at the same time. We developed a group mentality that I really came to depend on, sort of like “You’ve got my back and I’ve got your back.”

Nicole: “My first day at 10 east is hard to truly recall. It was a blur of fear, excitement, and countless unknowns. As my time as a new grad sped by, I came to find that 10 east was nothing of the ‘telemetry’ unit that I expected.

It was a melting pot of patients with a myriad of diagnoses. I became immersed in a patient population that spread across the whole spectrum of medical conditions, and was forced to quickly learn how to time manage, assess, document, and monitor. This whole process seemed daunting, and I would be lying if I said it wasn’t.”

Monica: “Working on 10 East, I started to learn very quickly of the difficult patient population and types of chronic diseases I would be dealing with on a regular basis. Our unit was becoming exposed to many new and unfamiliar types of patients from end stage liver disease to what seemed to



Monica Neslage, MSN, RN, received her Master’s in Nursing from California State University, Dominguez Hills in 2011. She also holds a Bachelor of Science in Health and Human Services with an emphasis in Public Health and is trained in motivational interviewing. Monica was hired as a new grad on 10 East in January of 2012.

Nicole Miram, MSN, RN, received her Masters of Science in Nursing with a focus on Leadership Management from Sonoma State University in 2011. Prior to that she received a Bachelor of Science in Exercise Biology from UC Davis. Aside from having a certification for Clinical Nurse Leader, Nicole is also a certified Public Health Nurse. Nicole came to the 10 East team as a new grad in September 2012.



Lee Moreira, BSN, RN, received her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Azusa Pacific University in 2011. She holds an additional Bachelor of Science in Business Administration which she received from Universidade Paulista, San Paulo Brazil. Lee is also a certified Public Health Nurse, speaks fluent Spanish, volunteers in the Post Anesthesia Care Unit with Thousands of Smiles, and is the Vice President of the San Diego National Association of Hispanic Nurses. Lee came to 10 East as a new grad in January 2012 and immediately joined the UBPC. She is currently working towards her CNIII, focusing on stroke education and patient follow up.

be an increase in psychiatric and mood disorder-type patients. Learning to interact with these patients proved to be quite demanding and tough at the start.”

A GOOD PRECEPTOR IS WORTH THEIR WEIGHT IN GOLD

“On my first day, I was immediately greeted by my preceptor who I would quickly come to know as an incredible bedside nurse, a selfless coworker, and a very dear friend. Her energy and compassion were, and still are, unparalleled. She had the ability to make me feel accepted, confident, comfortable, and supported. Which for a new grad are probably the most important things you can hope for.

With my preceptor, I got them all, wrapped up in a mentor and friend.”

Lee: “I had an amazing preceptor. She is the foundation upon which I built my practice and is largely responsible for the nurse that I am today. She had the passion, patience, knowledge, and great sense of humor needed to both guide me and put me at ease. She helped build my confidence, improve my knowledge, and made me work independently in a short period of time. I cannot thank her enough for all she did for me.”

Monica: “I had the opportunity of having two preceptors to learn from. With the Sculpizio CVC opening in August 2011, my first preceptor went along with it so I was paired up with another experienced RN on the unit. I felt very lucky to have gotten along so well with both of them, as well as to have learned from their two very different teaching styles. In the end, I know my first preceptor’s ‘throw the cub into the lion’s den’ approach forced me to break out of my shy, timid little shell. On the other hand, I still cherish my second preceptor’s compassionate, empathic, and cautious methods at the bedside. Both helped to form my outlook and the way I interact with patients every day I work.”

FINDING YOUR VOICE

Monica: “One of the most valuable opportunities I had as a new grad was joining the Unit Based Practice Council (UBPC). As a shy and timid person, the UBPC gave me a way to communicate in an arena that didn’t make me feel isolated. It also introduced me to valuable resources and helped me to focus the chaos of information in my brain. The great thing about our UBPC is that it was solution-focused. As tough as things may have been going on 10 East, we always knew we could bring our issues to the table for discussion and management support.”

Lee: “Being a part of the UBPC has been an amazing experience. From the first day I sat down across the table from my co-workers at our first meeting, I felt like part of the team. Our UBPC has been a great platform

for positive change and has allowed me to be a part of that change. I mean, let’s face it, no one wants to listen to a new grad. The UBPC, however, gave me a place to voice my ideas where they would be both heard and supported.”

Nicole: “I was very thankful for the 10 East UBPC because it allowed me to get involved in the unit right away. I liked that I didn’t have to work there for years first. Being on the UBPC has inspired me as a nurse and given me the knowledge and confidence to pursue quality improvement projects, not just with the group but on my own as well.”

ATTITUDE IS EVERYTHING

Monica: “I still look at our unit’s transition as a positive, as opposed to a negative, because of all the new skills I have acquired over the past two years. Despite being exposed to new types of patients, there are still a lot of difficulties that came along with the transitioning unit. Those difficulties include a loss of experienced RNs on the unit, which I noticed more than others, I think, due to having so many needs and questions during my first year. Even so, this negative was replaced with a positive because so many new RN’s were hired and I felt that I was a part of a unit that was focused on teaching and precepting. It felt like everyone was learning, even the seasoned RNs because of the new types of patients we admitted.”

Nicole: “What my experiences with my preceptor, managers, and co-workers have taught me, is that while our work does define who we are; it is also we, who define our work. There are days that can drown you, and the only way I was able to keep from sinking was to utilize the support, teamwork, and care of those I am lucky enough to be surrounded by at my job. I love being a nurse, and even in my most miserable and challenging moments, I can grasp at least one thing that keeps me subtly grateful. It is the hospital I work for and the people I work with who keep me going, keep me grounded, and constantly perpetuate my love for nursing on 10 East.”