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Balancing Act

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## Balancing Act

Neremiah Castaño, MS, APRN (NP-C/CNS/PHN) Interviewed by Sal Chiappe RN/editor

The following is an interview Sal Chiappe RN conducted with Neremiah Castano, Nurse Practitioner with the UCSD Moore's Cancer Center Surgical Urology disease team.

### Why did you decide to go into Nursing? Who influenced you to do so?

I looked up to my parents who were tremendous role models as they were both health care professionals (my mother is a clinical lab scientist; my father is a retired Navy corpsman). I also spent hundreds of hours as a child and teenager volunteering at medical tents at events with my dad (he was a CPR instructor and taught me CPR and first aid when I was 8) and at a local community hospital in high school. Subsequently, I developed a sense of calling to serve others as a health care provider.

The genuine care and compassion that I consistently saw nurses provide to their patients and the community made a lasting impression on me. Choosing to become a nurse has been one of the best life decisions that I have ever made. I periodically reflect on how that decision has made such a profoundly positive impact not only in the fulfillment my life, but especially on the lives of the countless patients and families that I have had the privilege to serve.

### Why would you encourage more men to go into Nursing?

Nursing is such a rewarding and gratifying profession that opens the door to myriad opportunities to care for people in various ways – clinic, hospital, research, education, leadership, military, informatics, etc. Additionally, I think it's time for all of us

to continue breaking gender stereotypes so that our patients can benefit from having a more diverse and balanced array of caregivers representative of our population. For example, a generation ago most physicians were male; however, over the past few years about half of all medical school graduates are now female. It's time for men to bridge the gap in nursing!

### I understand your wife Joy is also a practicing RN and that you have two young sons. How does your family accomplish the balancing act of having two career nurses with a young family and your military responsibilities as a Lieutenant Commander in the United States Navy Reserve?

We have to run a "tight ship"! I learned early on that in order for me to accomplish all of my goals that I have to be efficient with my time and schedule everything out. I still use the old traditional paper planner to coordinate and schedule many things weeks in advance. I am currently the Officer in Charge of my Navy unit and that entails a lot of responsibility that I end up scheduling to work on at night after the kids are asleep and during the weekend. However, I always find time to schedule in "fun" time together as a family as much as possible. Most importantly my wife has been very supportive and understanding of all of my endeavors since we began dating in high school. I think that we make a great team and I really couldn't do it without her. She really is the "captain" of this ship!

### Briefly describe your practice as a Nurse Practitioner with Surgical Oncology?

I work as a nurse practitioner for urologic oncology surgery and primarily care for outpatients at the Cancer Center and inpatients admitted to our La Jolla hospitals. I help manage and discharge inpatients in the early morning, provide education and serve as a "bridge" to the outpatient setting. I see outpatients in clinic the rest of the day with the most common diagnoses being prostate cancer, bladder cancer, kidney cancer, elevated PSA, BPH, hematuria, and everything else. I also serve as a clinical resource for our urology nursing and administrative team, provide staff education and training, and assist our physicians with several various duties.

### How does UC San Diego Health Systems support your military responsibilities?

The assistant director of nursing, Vicki Bradford, and Urology faculty program lead, Dr Kader, at the Moore's Cancer Center have both been exceptionally supportive by working with me to complete annual and monthly Navy Reserve training requirements. As a small sign of my appreciation a few years ago I nominated and UC San Diego Health was awarded the Patriot Award by the Department of Defense ESGR for all of the support that I have been provided to allow me to continue service of our country in the Navy Reserve.

**Describe the benefits of working in an institution that practices Academic Medicine?**

*I enjoy working in the academic medicine aspect of healthcare here at UCSD because I feel that we are on the cutting edge of evidence-based practice, constantly incorporating the latest research into our care, and we are constantly learning. There are so many opportunities for continued education from grand round lectures and multidisciplinary board meetings to patient support groups and classes that create a positive academic environment that our patients are ultimately able to benefit from tremendously.*

**You are presently in training for an Iron Man competition. Where on earth do you find the time and energy to take on such an event?**

*Precision planning and coordination! I had to schedule my longer 4-6 hour workouts months in advance for Saturday mornings starting at 6AM, so that I can be home in time to spend the rest of the day with the family. Fortunately I completed an Iron Man event a couple of years ago so I'm more familiar with the training requirements. I've consistently exercised 5-6 days per week since high school and used to run competitively, so the training adjustments and preparation for the Iron Man are a fun change. As far as energy, I think the passion, drive, and dedication to accomplish this goal coupled along with the excitement that I see my kids have had in watching me train for this grueling event has kept me motivated in those cold and often rainy (this year, at least) 6AM swim/bike/run sessions. As previously mentioned, I think that the biggest advantage has been excellent teamwork with my wife, which I appreciate immensely.*



**Neremiah Castaño, MS, APRN (NP-C/CNS/PHN)**

is a Nurse Practitioner with Urologic Oncology Surgery at the UCSD Moore's Cancer Center in La Jolla. He has been a Registered Nurse for 13 years, Nurse Practitioner for 7 years, and officer in the US Navy for 13 years (active and currently reserve). He earned his bachelor's and master's degrees at San Diego State University and is a proud Aztec alumnus. Neremiah enjoys spending time with his family, traveling, surfing, and running.