

UC San Diego

Winter 2009 - UC San Diego Health Journal of Nursing: Organ Transplantation

Title

Inspiration

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5rj9r1h7>

Journal

UC San Diego Health Journal of Nursing, 2(1)

Authors

Legaspi, Vanessa, RN

Villatoro de Jimenez, Fanny, RN

Villegas, Juanita, RN

Publication Date

2009

Peer reviewed

Inspiration

Vanessa Legaspi RN, Fanny Villatoro de Jimenez RN, Juanita Villegas RN

On 11 West in Hillcrest we care for abdominal transplant patients, specifically Liver and Kidney transplants, both pre and post transplantation. Our 11 West care team of Registered Nurses and Clinical Care Partners are proud to provide the constant 24/7 care needed by this complex group of patients. In addition to the procedures and treatments they require, we provide them with the continuous interaction, support, and encouragement they need in order to progress to a successful transplant and to resume their lives. The turnover of patients may be rapid or their stay may be long. There are those who challenge us daily – they may be ill, malnourished, weak, depressed, angry at being sick, frustrated – and they want nothing so much as to go home to their normal life. Our task is to remain constant, to be there for them and to give them the care they need.

Many patients come to us with loving and supportive families, some of whom may be demanding, feeling their loved one needs more attention, but who advocate for them. Others have no family to help them and that is where the "family" on 11 West steps in. We cannot always achieve the goals and the outcomes we would like in these instances, but what defines us is the process. Our family at 11 West was most defined by our interaction with one such patient, Judith Nations.

Judith came to 11 West, hoping to start life anew with a liver transplant.

In October 2006 she received her first orthotopic split liver transplant. She required several months of rehabilitation, eventually developing multiple fistulas, which led to open wounds and drains. During her long hospital stay on 11 West Judith became part of our family. She came to know every staff member, including each new intern and resident, calling us all by our first names. She developed a relationship with every one of us – physicians, RNs, CCPs, pharmacists, physical therapists, dieticians, tray passers, phlebotomists and even the housekeeping staff. Her illness seemed endless and complicated, but she never lost faith. She always had a smile, no matter how difficult her situation became. She radiated hope. A few months passed before she was able to go home. She was readmitted to 11 West very quickly after she fell, sustaining a broken clavicle and rib. Her nausea was uncontrollable. Back in the hospital, she struggled with infections, drains, pain and nausea, but her spirit never broke. Eventually her new liver failed and she was faced with the need to regain strength and improve her nutritional status before she could be considered for a second transplant.

Judith worked her heart out with the physical therapists, nutritionists, pharmacists and her care team. Though she was not fully recovered, after careful thought, the transplant team listed her for a second transplant, which came on December 5, 2007. She was critically ill after the surgery, requiring continuous



Vanessa Legaspi, RN,BSN is a graduate of San Diego State University School of Nursing. She participated in the Nursing Residency Program at UC San Diego and now has 4 years of transplant experience on 11 West.

Fanny Villatoro, CMSRN, BSN is a graduate of the nursing program at Point Loma University. She has ten years of transplant experience at UC San Diego and is a member of the Fall Prevention Committee on 11 West.

Juanita Villegas, CMSRN received her Associate of Science in Nursing from the University of Guam. She has four years of transplant experience on 11 West and is a member of the Skin Committee.



Judith Nations' 11 West Family. Left to right Elvie Sevilla, Dr. Chris Barry, Judith Nations, Ernie Gervacio, Muriel Velicaria, Vangie Quindoza, Merle Quindoza and Pamela Medina

blood products. Sadly her body rejected the new organ within the first week. We feared for her. But, because she was so ill, she was fortunate to receive her third liver transplant on December 11, 2007, just before her 61st birthday. Judith's body welcomed the third liver transplant and she was soon on the way to recovery.

Though Judith moved from floor to floor during the course of her long admission, 11 West was her inpatient home. She was with us for over a year and never once sustained a pressure ulcer. That was a tribute to the tireless care she received from her 11 West care team. Despite all the setbacks, Judith Nation defied the odds and was discharged finally on March 27, 2008. She is a constant reminder to all of

us that faith and courage and a love of life can give strength, even under devastating conditions. Since discharge Judith has given back to the hospital that helped give her a new start. She came to speak at the Transplant Symposium in May 2008 and shared her experiences. She was able to show that she could walk back into the hospital, healthy and even fashionably dressed! Seeing her made us feel pride – in her, of course, but also in our profession and our 11 West family. As a tribute to her and to ourselves as transplant nurses, we remain always ready for the next 'Judith' who may come to us, needing our care.

Statistics

Patient Name: J.N.

Admission Status: End Stage Liver Disease

Length of Stay: 11 months

Admission Date: October 12, 2006

Discharge Date: March 27, 2008

Important facts: Skin Breakdown: 0

Cost of New Life: PRICELESS