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A Journey of Transformation: My Transition in Nursing

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Nursing is a dynamic and ever-evolving profession that demands adaptability and continuous education and growth. My personal transition in nursing reflects this dynamism, starting with my initial foray into the field as my second career, leading to advanced degrees and certifications that have shaped my role as a healthcare provider. My exposure to nursing began with role models, my mom, a BSN and grandmother, an LVN.

In 2001, I earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Lycoming College, PA, famous home of the Little League World Series, not initially intending to pursue a career in nursing. However, during my undergraduate years, I found myself drawn to healthcare and the idea of making a meaningful impact on patients' lives. I was just too young at the time and playing Division 3 volleyball was paramount. I held a setting/assist record for many years.

In 2003, I took the significant step of enrolling at Roxborough Hospital School of Nursing to pursue an Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN). This decision marked the transition from an academic focus on liberal arts to the practical aspects of healthcare. Through clinical rotations, I made my rounds of the hospitals in Philadelphia, PA. Completing the ADN program allowed me to become a Registered Nurse and provided the foundational knowledge and skills essential for patient care. I started in an intensive care unit (ICU) as a new graduate nurse

and worked in ICUs on the east and west coasts for many years.

Realizing the need for further professional development beyond specialty certification: Critical Care Registered Nurse (CCRN) and Trauma Nurse Core Course (TNCC), I enrolled in the RN to MSN program at Sacred Heart University in 2013 while working full-time. This educational transition was a pivotal moment in my career. It enabled me to expand my scope of practice, engage in more specialized roles, and foster leadership skills within the ICU. Throughout the program, I learned advanced nursing concepts, evidence-based practice, and healthcare education and administration.

My transformative journey culminated in 2022 with completing a post-master certificate program from Purdue University, earning the title of Adult-Gerontology Clinical Nurse Specialist (AG-CNS). A Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS) is an Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN) who improves outcomes by providing direct



Maren Attanasio, a Clinical Nurse

Specialist whose nursing journey has taken her from the East Coast to various ICUs across the United States. Currently based in San Diego since 2008, Maren balances her professional life with a love for adventure, exploring off-road trails with her 2008 Xterra, backpacking, and wrangling her rescue dog. Family is central to Maren's life, with two younger brothers and a niece and nephew close to her heart. Beyond the hospital, she passionately supports Philadelphia sports.

patient care, leading evidence-based practice, optimizing organizational systems, and advancing nursing practice. As an APRN a CNS can diagnose, prescribe, and treat patients and specialty populations across the continuum of care. The two-year journey presented challenges in time management, particularly in fulfilling the completion of the required 500 clinical hours. Gratefully, I had the opportunity to confer these hours with the CVICU Clinical Nurse Specialist at UC San Diego Health. The advanced practice specialization allowed me to focus on the unique healthcare needs of older adults, equipping me with the expertise to provide advanced care, assess and manage complex health issues, and contribute to the overall well-being of the aging population.

Throughout my nursing journey, each transition has profoundly

impacted my ability to deliver high-quality care to patients. My ADN program provided me with essential clinical skills and prepared me to become a competent RN. Pursuing an MSN degree broadened my knowledge, allowing me to critically analyze and implement evidence-based practices. Finally, becoming an Adult-Gerontology Clinical Nurse Specialist equipped me to address the specialized health concerns of an aging population, and further patient outcomes. Throughout, family and friends have supported me. I also pursued and obtained board certification as an Acute Care Clinical Nurse Specialist for adults (ACCNS-AG). In the end, I procured a CNS position with 3GH ICU under the Education, Development, and Research (EDR) department at UCSD—my dream career and position.

Photograph by Lia Trageser, RN, BSN

