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10 Questions for the Newbie Nurse Practitioner on the Block

Jennifer Dvorak, RN Interviewed by Sal Chiappe RN/editor

The following is an interview with Jennifer Dvorak RN who will soon become the newest Nurse Practitioner at the Moore's Cancer Center when she passes her NP exam, she will then join the 28 plus Advanced Practice people who are currently employed at the Cancer Center.

How many years have you been a nurse?

I have been an RN with a BSN for 12 years.

Why did you decide to go back to school to obtain your Master's degree? How long did it take for you to complete the Nurse Practitioner program?

I have always wanted to be a Nurse Practitioner. I thrive at challenges. I found out my calling in life was to be a nurse and being a nurse practitioner was the next big challenge. In 2014 I chose not only to pursue my Master's degree in Nursing but to also become a Nurse Practitioner at the same time, I wanted as much experience as I could get before taking the next big leap in my career. I was a travel nurse for many years so I could live in amazing places while learning about other Universities around the country. As a part time student, my degree to become a NP took 2.5 years.

Explain how UC San Diego Healthcare supported you in furthering your nursing education?

I had the most supportive and caring nurse colleagues working beside me. Many nurses covered my busy practice 2 days a week for one year while I was gaining clinical hours off-site. These nurses worked tirelessly to make sure all my patients and their families

were taken care of. The entire nursing team was incredibly generous and encouraging. My manager's spent many hours planning my coverage and working with the nursing team to ensure that I did not have to stress about my work and school schedule. The direct physicians and Administrative Assistant's I work with could not have been more receptive as they made many sacrifices for me to reach my goals. The administrators at Moore's were readily available and reassuring. Everyone at Moore's supported me on a daily basis.

You have worked for 6 years as a Nurse Case Manager with Lung Cancer patients, as I understand you will continue to work with the same disease team. What will your role be as a Nurse Practitioner?

I will be seeing patients in clinic as well as working closely with the nurse and physician managing patient care outside of clinic. I will continue to manage the process for new patients and look forward to being more closely involved with research and clinical trials as well.

Will you be seeing patients in your own clinic?

Absolutely. I am thrilled with the opportunity of the Nurse Practitioners role to work more autonomously. It allows our team to be able to see more patients, provide more time with each patient and family for optimum patient care. I

will continue to see patients in clinic with Dr. Bazhenova and will have my own clinic 2 days a week, as well as, adding patients who need to be seen urgently.

What were the most difficult things you encountered as you were obtaining your advanced practice degree and working at the same time?

Working full and part time while going to school part time is extremely difficult, averaging 3-4 hours of sleep every night is not exactly healthy living. I barely got to spend any time with my family, and time with my friends after work or on the weekends became virtually nonexistent and my dog's walks were extremely short. My social scene consisted of my classmates on the computer during class, barista's, food delivery drivers, and flight attendants. My life was completely on hold.

With all the tumultuous changes we are seeing in Healthcare how valuable do you think the Nurse Practitioner will be in delivering care to an aging population?

Advance Practice Nurses are evolving into some of the most valued Healthcare professionals in the country. The Affordable Care Act is focusing on the fact that we do not have enough physicians in this country to see an increasing volume of patients as "baby boomers" mature. With the

advancement of technology and medicine, people are living longer with chronic illnesses. Nurse Practitioners are shown to be more cost effective and have the skill set to work independently to address the volume and modern demands of patient care.

What skill set does a Nurse Practitioner bring to the table between the Physicians and the RN's?

NP's bring a comprehensive perspective to health care. They have acquired seasoned knowledge as a RN, and are now clinicians that blend clinical expertise in diagnosis and treating health conditions with an added emphasis on disease prevention and health management. NP's need to have a complex mix of decision-making skills and clinical competencies to expand a practice.

You will be taking on a role with more responsibility in delivering patient care, what are you doing to prepare for this?

I have been working closely with the other medical oncology Nurse Practitioners at the Moore's Cancer Center, in that time I have been able to follow and learn from them as they see their patients in clinic. It has been remarkable how many NP's have been willing to offer their time, wisdom, and guidance to me. I am so excited to become a part of the Advance Practice Nurse's team.

With more responsibility comes more stress, what do you do to reduce that stress?

Learning how to deal with stress requires a great amount of trial and error. I created unhealthy habits during school as I didn't have the time to deal with ongoing stress. Reducing stress takes a mountain of energy and it is an ongoing battle. It's so easy to succumb to bad habits, but I have learned to reach out for support and help. We all make huge sacrifices for patient and family care, and it takes a team to provide optimum care.



Jennifer Dvorak RN, BSN, OCN, MSN is a registered nurse who recently graduated from Simmons College where she received her MSN and is scheduled to take the ANCC board exam to become a Nurse Practitioner. She received her BSN at California State University San Bernardino and has worked at many University hospitals around the country as a travel registered nurse in the intensive critical care, emergency/trauma, cardiology and oncology units. She joined UCSD Moore's Cancer Center in 2011 working as an outpatient oncology nurse specializing in medical lung oncology.