Joshua B. Johnson, RN, BSN, CCRN, was a staff nurse in the neurosurgical ICU at Deaconess Gateway Hospital in Newburgh, Indiana. He is now a nurse anesthesia student in the MSN Program at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga.

**Why did you become a nurse?**

When I was 18, I started pre-medical classes to become a physician and worked as a technician in the intensive care unit (ICU). I immediately became fascinated with the skills of the ICU nurses and the impact they had on patients’ lives. Because I enjoyed caring for and spending time with patients, I switched majors to nursing. I have been a registered nurse (RN) in the neurosurgical/medical/surgical ICU for 4 years now and before then I was a licensed practical nurse (LPN) in the ICU for 3 years.

**What about your job as a nurse makes you happy?**

I enjoy caring for critically ill patients with complex medical issues. As a nurse I can have such a positive and powerful impact on a patient’s life, and helping the patient progress to a better state of health makes me happy. I frequently care for patients receiving ventilation and I feel I am the patient’s eyes, ears, and voice. I am acting on patients’ behalf and they depend on me to give the best care I possibly can.

**What has been the most amazing experience you’ve had as a critical care nurse?**

The most amazing thing for me is the opportunity to learn and grow in the different aspects of nursing. I started out as a technician, then became an LPN, and continued with school to graduate and work as an RN. I worked in a charge nurse and code blue team member role and progressed to being a team leader on my unit. Now I am embarking on yet another pathway and just started nurse anesthesia school. There is so much to learn and there are so many possibilities in nursing and that is one reason I love what I do.

**What are the challenges you encounter and how do you overcome them?**

The hardest challenges are admitting patients nonstop and dealing with multiple code blues or rapid responses. The worst is the unexpected loss of a patient. Often we spend 12 or more hours with a patient, developing a bond with the patient and his or her family.

**Have you experienced anything extraordinary in your nursing career?**

A recent code blue situation with a 23-year-old patient lasted 6 hours. Talk about testing your ICU skills! This patient came in with a minor cardiac issue that turned into a big one rather quickly. The patient had 2 physicians and 4 ICU nurses at the bedside for the entire 6 hours. Fifty-three shocks, 32 intravenous pushes, and 3 exhausted code drug boxes later the patient was finally stabilized. This experience was almost surreal. The skills and knowledge I witnessed from coworkers and physicians during those 6 hours were nothing short of extraordinary.

**What has your journey as a nurse been like?**

It has been a wild nonstop ride but I wouldn’t have it any other way. I have learned that you get out of nursing what you put into it. If you come across something you don’t understand, look it up and study it. You owe it to your profession and your patients.

**At the end of a busy day, how do you find balance in your life?**

I enjoy going to the gym; it seems to alleviate some of the stress and tension that can build up over the day. I also enjoy spending time with family and friends—people who are special in my life.

**How has AACN played a role in your career?**

I was able to attend NTI in 2011 in Chicago along with many friends and colleagues. It was my first time and it exceeded my expectations. I attended tons of sessions that allowed me to gain knowledge about new evidence-based practices and to build on foundations from previously learned knowledge. It was amazing to see all those critical care nurses in one place with a common goal.

“I Am a Critical Care Nurse” features the extraordinary in a critical care nurse’s ordinary experiences. To be featured in this department, contact Critical Care Nurse via e-mail at ccn@aacn.org.
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