I Am a Critical Care Nurse

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

The acuity of our patients can be challenging. Because my facility performs cardiac surgery on high-risk individuals, caring for them poses its own set of difficulties. Luckily, there is a strong culture of collaboration on my unit. The nurses, physicians, and physician assistants work seamlessly to overcome challenges.

What has your journey as a nurse been like?

Being a nurse has been one of the most incredible experiences in my life thus far. Looking back on the past 4 years, I cannot believe how far I've come as a professional. I have learned to be patient, compassionate, careful, and selfless. I have held patients' hands as they took their last breath, and hugged family members as they received information that their loved one had just survived lifesaving surgery. As a nurse, I often feel like I've been chosen to be part of such a special group of individuals. Last year, I was nominated as the cocohairperson of a career recognition program that helps acknowledge bedside nurses who go above and beyond. In 2013, I will be moving up to the chairperson position; this is one of my proudest accomplishments so far in my career.

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

My loving husband and my beautiful 8-month-old daughter are the light of my life and keep me grounded. Becoming a nurse has helped me learn how to juggle being a wife, mom, student, and professional. Also, I have made some incredible friends who are nurses, and I can share the physical and emotional demands of being a nurse with them. We help each other stay balanced as well.

How has AACN played a role in your career?

As my affiliated association, AACN is important to me and has given me the tools and resources to become a certified nurse. I continue to improve my skills and knowledge as a critical care nurse thanks to several AACN publications. Reading about the success and professionalism of other nurses has been a motivating factor in pursuing my masters of science in nursing. CCN

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.

Jenna Blind, RN, CCRN, is a staff nurse in the cardiothoracic intensive care unit at North Shore University Hospital in Manhasset, New York.

Why did you become a nurse?

When I was 8 years old, my mother was diagnosed with breast cancer. The nurses who cared for her, and for me, left a lasting impression. I've chosen to give back to others like those nurses gave to me. I am happy to share that my mother has been cancer free for almost 20 years.

What about your job as a nurse makes you happy?

The best part of my job is knowing that I play a critical role in assisting patients in their recovery from lifesaving cardiovascular and thoracic surgeries. The care I provide improves their quality of life. It is exciting to see my patients progress through the perioperative period. I also find joy in precepting new nurses on my unit. My love of education allows me to guide novice and experienced nurses into the specialty area of critical care.

Tell us about an extraordinary experience you’ve had as a critical care nurse.

The care provided by the nurses on my unit every day is extraordinary. We work tirelessly and selflessly to put our patients first and improve their quality of life.

Recently, I cared for a young man recovering from an aortic aneurysm repair. It is not often that I have the experience of taking care of an individual just a few months younger than me. He recovered from his surgery with only a few complications. After he completed rehabilitation, he came back to thank me for all my hard work in saving his life. He continues to visit often, and during his most recent visit he told me that he is applying to nursing school because of the incredible impact I had on him during his recovery. This was such a heartwarming experience. I will never forget the impression this patient had on me professionally and emotionally.

©2013 American Association of Critical-Care Nurses doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.4037/ccn2013795