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International Collaboration During a Global Pandemic

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International Collaboration During a Global Pandemic

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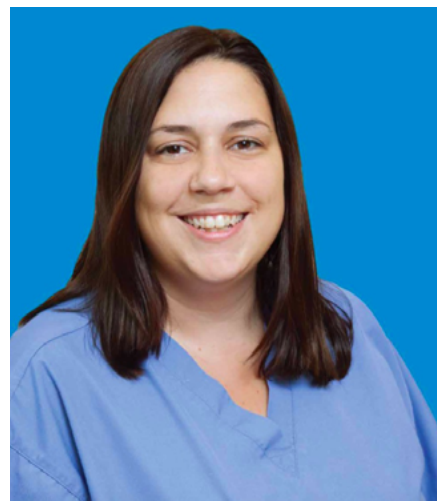
According to the 2021 Gallup poll, nurses have been rated the most honest and trusted professionals in America, marking the 19th year in a row that they have held this top honor. Those who work with or receive care from a nurse understand the rationale for this long-standing designation. As the COVID-19 pandemic rages on, nurses throughout UC San Diego Health (UCSDH) have upheld the nursing code of ethics by working day after day, selflessly putting concerns for their own health and that of their families aside. In the absence of hospital visitation, nurses have stepped in not only as care

providers, but also as replacement friends/family to patients. During this time, I have never been more proud to be a nurse leader. I learned that there is no limit to what nurses are willing to take on when it comes to the health and wellbeing of their community.

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Jess Mandel, Chief of Pulmonary Critical Care Medicine, began coordinating with medical professionals in San Diego County to engage with their medical counterparts in Tijuana, Mexico. The group collaborated with Tijuana Hospital General (TGH) regarding the COVID-19

pandemic response to share best practices for care and treatment of affected patients. Kelly O'Connor, RN, 3GH, ICU, was the first nurse to participate in the collaboration with TGH. In May of 2020, I traveled to TGH accompanied by fellow nurses, Danisha Jenkins, MSN, RN and Christina Kelley, DNP, CNS to present the TGH nurse leaders with didactic education on Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome (ARDS) and prone therapy. The education concluded with hands on training in prone techniques with the TGH nursing staff. Despite the burnout and exhaustion

they were feeling from the pandemic, nurses and physicians traveled to TGH Monday through Friday.



Laura Chechel, MSN, RN, CNS, CCRN is Nurse Manager of the Cardiovascular Intensive Care Unit at UCSDH. She has worked in the ICU setting since 2004 and joined the UCSDH team in 2012. She is currently chair of the Leadership Oversight Committee and participates in the Professional Development Council. She is also an active member of several professional organization including the American Nurses Association-California (ANA\C) and The Association of California Nurse Leaders (ACNL). She sits on the legislative committee with the ANA\C and is a Membership Assembly Representative. She is also co-chair of the ACNL Subcommittee on Racism & Social Injustice in Healthcare.



PPE for MGH and TGH included a full suit with double masks and double eye protection

Nurse volunteers from UCSDH 3GH/CVICU and Sharp Chula Vista Medical Center (SCVMC) provided reinforcements of the education and training with TGH staff over the next 4 weeks. In total, over 40 nurses joined the cross-border collaboration to help TGH nurses care for patients and improve outcomes.

At TGH, much like San Diego, staffing challenges were evident. In spite of these and other pandemic-related challenges, the TGH nurses maintained an overwhelmingly positive outlook about their work and an eagerness to learn. They were exhausted and overworked, but still committed to learning all they could. The experience was powerful and humbling for many of the volunteers, including myself, as exposure to a health system and cultural milieu other than our own was an opportunity for both teams to develop a deeper understanding of alternative nursing care delivery models.

After hearing about the collaboration between TGH and

the San Diego teams', Mexicali Hospital General (MGH) inquired about collaborative efforts with their facility. In a matter of weeks, nurse and physician volunteers began sharing best practices with MGH. Nurse education expanded beyond prone therapy to include nurse driven sedation/analgesia titration practices. A weekly debrief with the UCSDH Healer Education and Assessment Referral Program (HEAR) team allowed the volunteers to process the experience. HEAR team members supported volunteers through discussion on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the alternative care environment, and the overall collaboration.

The community engagement experience had an empowering effect on the nursing teams in San Diego, Tijuana and Mexicali. Patient outcomes improved and nurses reinvigorated their goals of optimizing care and processes to improve survival for patients with COVID-19. Using the Magnet values of community inclusion

through structural empowerment, relationship between San Diego hospital systems strengthened and international relationships were forged. As the pandemic continues, so does the international collaboration between Tijuana and Mexicali Hospital General, UCSDH and the San Diego community. This collaboration brings new meaning to the word "community" and allows nurses to connect in meaningful and rewarding ways.



Laura Chechel, Christina Kelley, and Danisha Jenkins outside of TGH hospital and walking across the US/Mexico Border

