

## **UC San Diego**

### **Summer 2024 - UC San Diego Health Journal of Nursing: Forging a Path in Nursing**

#### **Title**

From Novice to Leader: A Nurse's Journey Within the Hospital Walls

#### **Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3m4844p7>

#### **Journal**

UC San Diego Health Journal of Nursing, 17(1)

#### **Author**

James, Kristina, MSN, RN, CNL

#### **Publication Date**

2024-04-01

Peer reviewed

# From Novice to Leader: A Nurse's Journey Within the Hospital Walls

Author: Kristina James, MSN, RN, CNL, PCCN

For as long as I can remember, I always wanted to work in healthcare. Looking back, I fell into the nursing role with my friends and family. One of my favorite 'nursing' memories of my childhood was a camping trip I took in Girl Scouts. Many of the girls on the trip fell ill with a stomach bug and I volunteered to take care of them, encouraging them to push fluids, assisting them to the bathroom, and staying with them while they recovered. A little-known fact about me is that I 'grew up' at UC San Diego Health (UCSDH). I was born at UCSDH Hillcrest and my parents were pharmacists here until they retired. Learning about UCSDH's incredible contributions to our community over the years inspired my desire to follow in their footsteps upon graduating from nursing school. I asked my school for an externship opportunity at UCSDH and was lucky enough to complete a rotation on both Hillcrest 10 East and Thornton 2 East. When I graduated, the manager of 2 East offered me a position as a newly licensed registered nurse.

I started on 2 East when it was the only non-cardiac intermediate care unit on the La Jolla campus. I will forever be grateful to my 2 East family for creating a safe place for me to learn about multiple types of patients from bone marrow transplant to medicine to surgery in a fast-paced environment. During my time on 2 East, I was able to grow and contribute to the unit and

organization through participation in our Unit-Based Practice Council (UBPC), the Falls Prevention Committee, and Clinical Practice Council (CPC). I also served as the editor of the 2 East newsletter. Due to my eagerness to be involved, I was humbly nominated as Rookie of the Year.

Eventually, I stepped into the resource nurse role and helped precept nurses across the organization, teaching them how to care for intermediate care patients in preparation for opening new progressive care units in Jacobs Medical Center (JMC). After 3 years on 2 East, I had the opportunity to help open one of these new units in JMC, 4FGH Surgical Oncology. During my time on JMC 4FGH, I was able to expand my knowledge in many new roles. I worked as a resource nurse, Clinical Nurse Leader, and charge nurse.

Outside of the unit, I continued to attend the Falls Prevention Committee and CPC as a representative of JMC 4FGH. I was nominated as the Co-Chair of CPC in 2016 and became Chair in 2017. I started to attend Nursing Cabinet as the Co-Chair/Chair of CPC. Engaging with bedside nurses on CPC and Nursing Cabinet was incredibly rewarding. We were able to provide a voice for our peers and affect positive change for everyone. In 2019, I was nominated as a Nursing Cabinet Co-Chair, and with the help of my other Co-Chair, successfully



**Kristina James MSN, RN, CNL, PCCN** is the assistant nurse manager of Thornton 2 West and has worked at UC San Diego Health since 2013. She received her MSN at the University of San Diego and is finishing her DNP from Purdue University Northwest this summer. In 2022, Kristina was awarded Nurse Leader of the Year for Structural Empowerment. In her free time, she likes to trail run and check out the local food scene.

transitioned the shared governance meeting from a report-out structure to a more actionable, problem-solving meeting. With my leadership experience in CPC and Nursing Cabinet, I was asked to be the inaugural Chair of a new interfacility shared governance council between UC Irvine Health (UCI) and UCSDH, the UCI/UCSD Shared Nursing Governance Council. This council's goal was to work together to create efficiencies within our shared charting system, EPIC.

After working as a bedside leader for many years, with the support and encouragement of my colleagues, I felt empowered to take the next step into leadership and applied for a position as an assistant nurse manager. I felt like this transition would help me become a better advocate for my bedside team and took the chance to step out of my comfort zone. I gained a lot of experience as a bedside leader and knew that my time working with my interdisciplinary peers across UCSDH and UCI prepared me to step into my current role as the assistant nurse manager on Thornton 2 West. Luckily, my 2 West team took a chance on me in 2021 and I have had the pleasure of working with them since then. Together we have been able to create change, improve recognition, and increase our patient and staff satisfaction. By sharing my story, I hope that I can inspire others to collaborate and contribute to the successes of our organization. I am so proud to be a UCSDH nurse and look forward to continuing to model the way for my UCSDH team for years to come.

## My Inspiration into the Awesome World of Nursing

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

do not come without consequences, particularly when considering the population of patients suffering a comorbidity of addiction, or those patients so firmly averse to accepting medications or are medication resistant. Medication resistance and non-adherence are significant problems observed within this population, which greatly alters the quality of life for those tormented by this illness.

This fueled a fervor to dissuade developing an archetype of a quick fix, go-to solution of “taking a pill” as an easy fix to the ever-growing symptoms of anxiety. Enthusiastic to deliver more tools to patients suffering from addiction, and galvanized to offer alternative coping skills to aid patients in managing their symptoms, I worked with a colleague to research yoga as an adjunct therapy to manage anxiety in our patient population. This included a trifecta of treatment modalities: deep breathing, meditation and yoga stretching to be offered three times a week by a yoga instructor. With a lack of resources, we improvised: one day of teaching by a licensed yoga instructor, one day by my colleague - an RN and licensed yoga instructor - and the third day taught by myself, an avid yoga fan.

My colleague and I had done extensive biomedical and cardiovascular research respectively, but were absolute novices in this type of research. We therefore sought council from UCSDH Scientist, Dr. Judy Davidson, who imparted her wealth of

knowledge into our project. We also called upon one of our medical directors Dr. Vanessa Lauzon and a medicine resident Dr. Priti Ojha.

We were astounded at the spirited participation we received, from even the most unlikely of candidates, from the most robust assaultive patients to the very acutely psychotic. We received great feedback on our yoga program: “I never thought yoga could help me” and “this is the only time I feel peace in my head”.

Our study was published in Archives of Psychiatric Nursing entitled *East meets west in psychiatry: Yoga as an adjunct therapy for management for Anxiety*. Finally, after our hard work and proven results, our manager hired a licensed yoga instructor to offer yoga twice a week as an adjunct treatment modality! Years later, yoga remained part of the psychiatric units' curriculum prior to COVID taking its toll (Figures 1-5).

This project inspired me to seek more knowledge: I returned to school to earn my BSN. I continue to cherish the opportunity to educate and equip the next generation of nurses to deliver the care I wished for my mom. I don't know what the future holds, but I do know I appreciate the opportunity to serve the psychiatric population, to be in this awesome profession of nursing, and to be working alongside such a supportive team!