

UC San Diego

Spring 2023 - UC San Diego Health Journal of Nursing: The Unique Power of Nursing

Title

11. Patient Stories

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/56k6w3bp>

Journal

UC San Diego Health Journal of Nursing, 16(1)

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Publication Date

2023-04-01

Peer reviewed

Patient Stories

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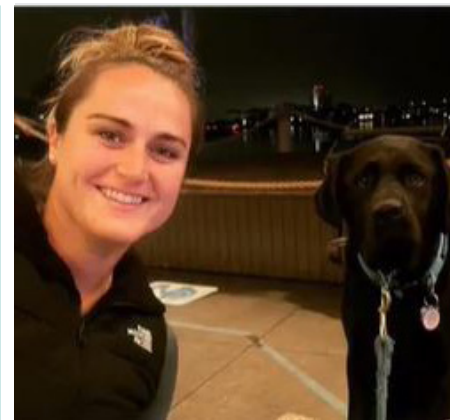
Project by Stacy Street, Jacobs Medical Center 3GH ICU

Being a nurse is not an easy task, regardless of a nurse's specialty or unit. Jacobs Medical Center 3GH Intensive Care Unit (ICU) admitted their first COVID-19 patient in March of 2020 and immediately felt the immense impact of caring for these complex patients. In addition to their standard ICU patients (medical, surgical, and oncology), they became the COVID-19 ICU for the La Jolla UC San Diego Health (UCSDH) campus. The fear of this novel pandemic permeated the floor, amplifying the already high stress environment for all ICU staff.

One of their bedside nurses, Stacy Street, noticed a perpetual disappointment each time she returned to work to find a former patient was no longer in their room. Based on their unit's typical patient population, empty rooms typically signified that the patient passed or transitioned to a different level of care.

From this experience, Stacy was

inspired to connect patient stories with their former care team by Dr. Amy Bellinghausen, a Pulmonary Critical Care Attending Physician, who works in the UCSDH Post ICU Recovery Clinic. This clinic helps post ICU patients transition back to their lives by providing additional support and continuity of care for their critical illness. Working with



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Figure 1

Dr. Bellinghausen, Stacy identified this clinic as the best access point to connect with former patients.

Through Stacy's work with the Evidenced-Based Practice Fellowship with the San Diego Consortium for Excellence in Nursing and Allied Health, she studied the impact of burnout on ICU nurses and the influence patient's stories could have on nurse well-being. During her research, she found that the use of patient stories to reduce burnout was a relatively new concept.

Her project focused on identifying, compiling and sharing patient experiences and their continued journey after their ICU discharge. Stacy connected with patients via email and received their consent to post updates, including pictures of their life post ICU on the employee-facing project bulletin board [Figures 1 and 2]. The bulletin board was placed in a central location where staff receive their shift assignments, ensuring maximum exposure.

Additionally, some patients agreed to attend the virtual Unit Based Practice Council (UBPC) meetings [Figure 3]. UBPC meetings are typically attended by about one-third of the unit's staff and it provided a platform where Stacy interviewed patients, and often their family members, to discuss their post ICU life. The impact felt by staff during these interviews was immeasurable. The patients' reflections of their time in the ICU, their favorite memories after the ICU, or simply just seeing how far they have progressed outside of their ICU bed—was truly a remarkable experience. While Stacy's project was focused on bringing wellness to her colleagues within the ICU, she found that it also provided patients a meaningful experience to



Figure 2

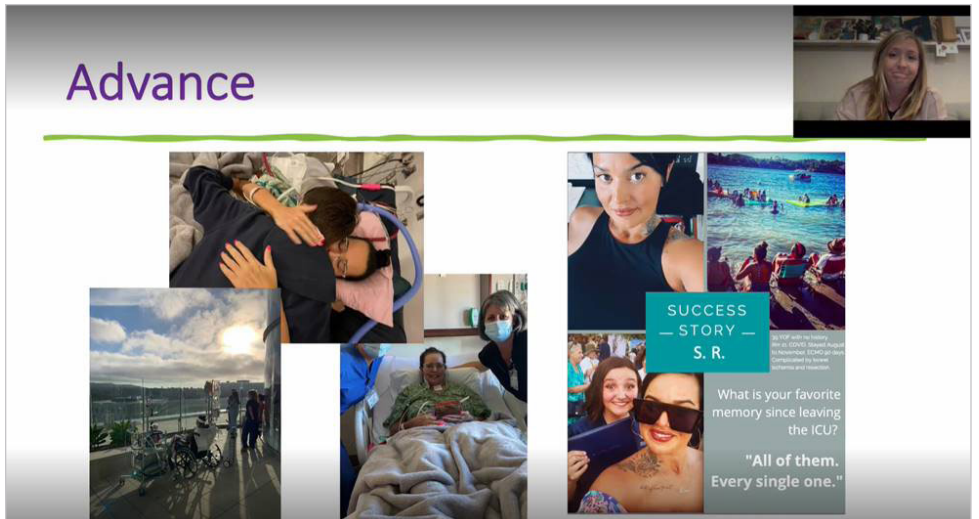


Figure 3



Figure 4

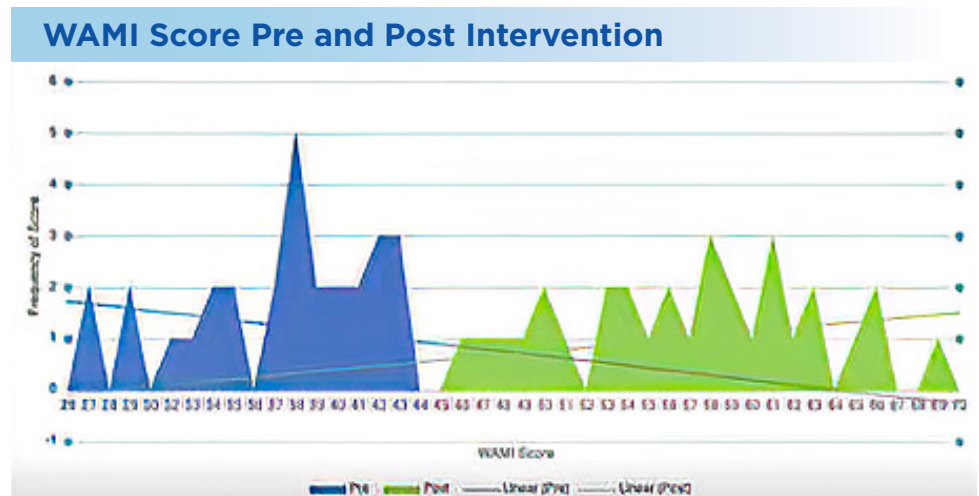


Figure 5

connect with their former caregivers as well [Figure 4].

Stacy measured the impact of her project, by surveying the nurses with general qualitative questions from two validated scales: Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) and the Work and Meaning Inventory (WAMI) [Figure 5]. All survey respondents indicated that they benefited from this project. Her data showed an improvement with burnout scores and demonstrated a significant increase in the nurses' work and meaning index. Additionally, qualitative themes noted throughout the survey were "redefining value of work," "counteract feeling of futility," and "perspective taking."

While this concept is relatively new in the nursing profession, the project's profound impact may be the key to improving nurses' meaning in their work and ultimately, their overall wellness. Hearing patients' stories helps nurses connect to their purpose and provides us insight from the patient and their families on ways to provide better care. Although this project focused on the impact on nurses, all healthcare workers could benefit from this unique experience.

One Of A Kind Service To Nursing And The Community