Nursing Experience- Gerontology Acceleration Programme 2017-18

Congratulations to us, Rachel Leary and Joemar Senegan, we have successfully completed the Gerontology Acceleration Programme (GAP).

After GAP, I had a better understanding of the older persons' journey in the health service. I had first hand experience to see what happens to our residents, in aged care, when we send them to Christchurch and Burwood Hospitals.

In my 6 years of nursing in New Zealand, I have always worked in aged care. When I had my competency assessment program (CAP), it was undertaken in another aged residential care (ARC) facility.

I took the challenge to participate in the GAP because I admire Nurses working in the DHB. I often wondered if I was capable of working in a fast paced nursing care with the turnover of acutely unwell patients. I thought that participating in GAP would be a good opportunity for me to experience working within an acute care setting.

I was lucky to have my clinical placement in both hospitals.

My first clinical placement was in Ward 24, General Medicine and Acute Stroke Ward. I was there for 3-months. I tried my best to learn about the routine, utilising Med chart, learning about early warning signs, CDHB protocols and getting IV certified, as soon as possible, to maximize my practice in the area. The team were very helpful with my learning. I was able to meet the goals I'd set with the support of my preceptor and mentor. To have worked alongside a stroke Nurse performing clot retrieval was educational and interesting. I had spent a day with the palliative team and I gained a lot from them, i.e. reviewing analgesia and talking to patients and families about their prognosis and treatment options. I had the privilege of looking after one of our residents in another setting.

My 2nd clinical rotation was in Orthopedic rehabilitation unit (Ward D1) in Burwood Hospital. To me, it was slightly like age care. I got to know the patients better and turnover was not as fast as in Christchurch Hospital. I learnt a lot whilst working with Physiotherapists and Occupational therapists and the importance of encouraging independence. The team in D1 made me feel like a part of their team. I had a chance to work with the Continence Nurse and Needs Assessor.

In both wards, I gained a better outlook of the importance of multi-disciplinary team (MDT) for best patient outcomes and continuum of care. The plan of discharge is well organized by the MDT to ensure that the patients are ready, well equipped with support and safe for discharge back in the community.

As part of GAP I undertook postgraduate studies through Otago University. The Gerontology paper was appropriate as most of my patients were elderly. The advance health assessment paper helped me to prepare for the challenges and enhanced my nursing practice. This is applying in practice what we learned in theory.

When I went back to Bishop Selwyn for my 3rd rotation, I was excited to make use of my learnings and experiences to improve delivery of care to our residents. I was excited to share my learnings to my colleagues and be a resource person.

My personal experience made me realise a lot of things. I participated in our quality improvement project which aims to avoid unnecessary hospitalisation, maximising comfort and dignity of our residents and minimising stress to all parties. The overarching goal is to ensure that we align the care provided by putting the interest and the wishes of the residents' first.

Overall, GAP made me a better Nurse. I gained new friends and mentors. I can proudly say now that I am capable to work in both hospitals. I have confirmed that Gerontology is my passion.

Thank you to all Charge Nurse Managers and their teams, our mentors and preceptors for their support. Thank you to the people behind GAP. Thank you to Ultimate Care-Bishop Selwyn for the encouragement, support and opportunity to be part of GAP.

Good luck to the 2018 GAP participants.

Michelle Bugayong, *RN, PGDip in Health Sciences*
Clinical Services Manager
UCG- Bishop Selwyn