Journey to Becoming a Registered Nurse

Some people from early on in their lives know what they want to pursue a profession in, while others remain undecided and unsure of what they want to pursue. The endless possibilities in a world where anyone can fulfill their passion in a career they’re interested in, makes choosing a career that much harder. In third grade, I became interested in a possible career in nursing. I realized I wanted to become a registered nurse when I babysat my cousin at the age of fifteen years old.

It all started when I babysat my younger cousin, Brooke. She was six years old at the time and sitting on my pink and purple striped bed, frowning and focusing on her drawing. The sunlight coming from my window emphasized her honey brown hair. Brooke drew hearts on a blank piece of paper and filled them in with an electric crimson crayon. I began to make my way into the kitchen to get a snack, until I heard her crying. I ran back to my room and saw tears running down her cheeks. Her face and caramel colored brown eyes were starting to turn a light shade of red and her lips began to quiver. Her spiral curls were starting to stick to her face.

I noticed blood on her index finger and it was apparent that it was a paper cut. She wrapped her finger with her other hand and clutched it towards her chest as to not see the blood. “It’s ok.” I said, trying to reassure her. I took her to the bathroom and ran her index finger under lukewarm soap and water. I went to the hallway and opened a door where my family keeps
Band-Aids, rubbing alcohol, and cotton balls. I took the supplies back to my bathroom as I noticed Brooke blowing her nose and wiping away her tears with Kleenex. “This is going to sting a little bit.” I said to Brooke. I applied the rubbing alcohol on her finger with a cotton ball and the pungent smell of the rubbing alcohol filled the bathroom. I then wrapped her finger with a Band-Aid. “See? The worst part is over. Come on; let’s go get something to eat.” I told her as I took her hand and made our way towards the kitchen.

A simple paper cut on my cousin’s finger made me lean towards a possible career in nursing. I knew after that incident that I wanted to help others. The scent of alcohol and the sight of blood did not bother me. I enjoyed the feeling of tranquility that ran through me as I cleaned her wound and wrapped her finger in a Band-Aid. In that moment, I even felt like a nurse carefully helping a patient with a cut. By using the internet to research registered nursing, I learned the process that I would have to take to pursue this career. In order to become a registered nurse, I need to complete two years in a community college to get my Associate of Applied Science degree, take the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN) to get licensed, and be a role model to my future patients.

I've learned that there are different education paths that a nurse can take. The Ferguson's Career Guidance Center states that there are programs that offer an Associate of Applied Science degree in community colleges that last approximately two years (Field 2). There's also another option of how aspiring registered nurses may also receive a bachelor's degree from a college or university (Field 3). The only downfall is that it can take between four and five years. I plan on receiving my Associate of Applied Science degree while I'm here at Northwest Arkansas Community College (NWACC). I remember looking into Arkansas State University and University of Central Arkansas nursing programs in my last year of high school While I was told
their nursing programs were great, I decided to go to a community college which was the best option for me at the time. I talked to Ms. Grau who works at the Admissions office at NWACC while she was helping me fill out my Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). She informed me about the nursing program and showed me a list of the general education classes I would need to take first and then specific classes for nursing.

Money has always been an issue when I was growing up, but my becoming a registered nurse, I can provide for myself and my family. My last year of high school, I began looking for scholarships and grants and fortunately that is what is helping me through college to become a registered nurse. According to the Occupational Outlook Handbook, the 2012 median pay was $31.48 per hour. In the NWACC website, it states that new graduates working in Northwest Arkansas may start earning $18-25 per hour. Looking through the Bureau of Labor Statistics, I learned that with experience, good performance, continuous education, registered nurses can move to other settings or even be promoted to positions with more responsibility(7). Just like in most jobs, the more education one has, the more likely one will have better financial security. I might not make a lot of money in this career as opposed to a doctor, but that's fine by me. The chance to help someone and possibly save a life is a great reward in my eyes.

Registered nurses need to be able to evaluate their patient's health and their own health (American Nurses Association). In the article, "Appraisal aims at broad view of RN's health, wellness, safety on the job: Healthy Nurse program seeks to position RNs as role models.", Karen A. Daley states how a nurse has to be healthy in order to make it easier to help patients do the best thing for their health. I don't plan on giving advice to my patients about how they should exercise, for example and yet I don’t engage in any exercise. A nurse needs to be calling to care, priority to self-care, opportunity to serve as a role model, responsibility to educate, and authority
to advocate in order for nurses to function at their highest potential (American Nurses Association 2). Nurses also have to be committed and be compassionate to their job (Spear 5). I plan on being a role model to my younger cousins and to my future patients. I was surprised that registered nurses have a responsibility to educate. I never knew about that until I went to my Human Growth and Development class where my professor, Dr. Wilson, said that nurses educate patients and the public.

A role model is defined as a person looked to by others as an example to be imitated. My role model that I've looked up to is Carla Espinosa from the TV medical comedy-drama series, Scrubs. The show is fictional and Carla plays a registered nurse who works at Sacred Heart Hospital and speaks both English and Spanish fluently. I hope to be understanding to my patients, knowledgeable about nursing, and work hard just like Carla does on the TV show. My younger cousins, Michelle and Brooke, have told me before that I am their role model. By going into this career, I hope to become a stronger role model that they will admire.

Figure 1. Carla Espinosa from the TV Show, Scrubs.

As in every occupation, qualities in a person varies and matters to the profession that a person plans on going into. For nursing, I need to have qualities such as critical-thinking skills, detail oriented, emotional stability, organizational skills, physical stamina, and speaking skills (Bureau of Labor Statistics). I have had my doubts about nursing but according to Michele Spear
who has been a registered nurse for 31 years, she wouldn't change a thing that she's done and
would still go into nursing in a heartbeat. She claims that's she's well appreciated at her job and
finds satisfactions and joys that go far beyond material rewards. For some reason, this comforts
me and makes me feel sure of my decision to become a registered nurse.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics states how I may have to work nights, weekends, and
holidays since I plan to work at a hospital where patients need round-the-clock care. I also have
will have to work in rotating shifts. Since I am not currently married or have any children, I can
solely focus on myself and my future patients. Working nights, weekends, and holidays will
obviously take a toll on my personal life as Michele Spear said, but as long as I can help
someone and know that I've done everything that I possibly can, I wouldn't mind giving up my
personal life.

According to the NWACC website, the Associate of Applied Science degree is intended
for me to prepare and apply to the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered
Nurses. I've learned that the NCLEX is a computerized exam that covers all areas of the test
plan, including mental health, medical/surgical, OB/GYN, and pediatrics (NCSBN). The NCLEX
is a pre-licensure assessment used to identify candidates that can demonstrate sufficient nursing
ability to practice entry-level nursing (NCSBN). I can be licensed in more than one state by
taking another examination or by the endorsement of a license issued by another state (Field 3).
This sounds great to me because I plan on getting licensed in Northwest Arkansas and then
possibly in California. My biggest goal and dream is to work at Valley Presbyterian Hospital in
Van Nuys, California. This is the hospital where I was born in and I would love to help people in
a place where I grew up. The exam sounds exhausting and stressful, but with my knowledge that
I'll learn through the nursing program, I know that I can overcome my stress and work hard on my grades in order to pass the NCLEX.

My research has strongly motivated me to make the highest and best grades that I possibly can in order to have a higher acceptance rate to get into the nursing program. If all goes well and I get into the nursing program, I will then graduate and receive my Associate of Applied Science degree in Nursing. My research has forced me to sit down and contemplate my future and I now know the expectations of becoming a registered nurse. Throughout high school and even now that I'm in my second semester of college, my knowledge of nursing was minimal but in my heart I was sure that I wanted to become a nurse. I constantly question myself if this is the right career for me. I remember sitting in class and thinking of how my future is so far away and now it is gradually approaching. Some days I feel as if I am at the peak of a roller coaster. I'm one hundred percent positive that I do want to pursue this career. I feel eager, ecstatic, and secure of my choice. Then the roller coaster suddenly takes an accelerating speed to the bottom and I am left pondering my choice of becoming a nurse. However, now that I am finished researching, I know that I am ready to overcome this obstacle that leaves me questioning my choice. I will most likely be stressed out but I know it will be worth it if it means I can fulfill my passion and interest in the human body and helping patients. It still astonishes me and frightens me that I am no longer in high school. I am nineteen years old and an adult that is in college focusing and heading down the path to my future career. I remember having to answer the question of what I want to be when I grow up back in third
grade, and now the moment has arrived. I am grown up and about to embark on this journey on becoming a nurse.
Works Cited


“My cousins Michelle and Brooke.” Personal photograph. 12 April 2014.


Wilson, David. Class lecture on Nursing. 22 January 2014.