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Eng 100

Formal Assignment #1

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### Opening New Doors

The circular button of the elevator lit up a dull yellow as I pressed the number two. Once the metallic silver doors slid shut, the elevator began to ascend. Reaching into my pocket, I made sure I had a pencil and a notebook ready to go. My peers were all nervously discussing what medical units they would be observing for the week.

“So, Molly, what unit are you on?” Emma asked.

“2 East,” I said with a nervous smile, “You?”

“MedSurg,” she replied.

I nodded not knowing what else to say. Below me, I could feel the elevator coming to a halt, causing me to lose my balance a little as we were suspended in the shaft. The shiny doors slid open and I stepped into the hallway.

“Good luck,” Emma shouted behind me.

Giving her a quick thanks, I turned toward the sign with arrows pointing in different directions to figure out where I needed to go. For the most part the hospital seemed strangely quiet. I imagined there to be more hustle and bustle. The sign pointed me to the left, so I ventured toward 2 East. Even though I was wearing baggy teal scrubs and white tennis shoes that gave me blisters, I still felt like an outsider compared to the faculty.

After passing a hallway filled with abandoned beds and closed office doors, I finally made it to the medical unit. At the nurses' station, women in red scrubs were typing on the computer and talking to their co-workers. Others in blue scrubs were standing in various parts of the dim-lit hallway and typing on their portable computers or counting pills. Doctors in white lab coats were weaving in and out of patient's rooms, constantly putting on hand sanitizer as they did. Excitement and nerves filled my stomach with butterflies. Today, was my first day of clinical rotation through the Allied Health program. I finally get to shadow nurses and observe what the healthcare field is like.

All my life I wanted to become a nurse. My mother is currently a nurse at A.I. Dupont Hospital for Children and worked on the oncology unit for twenty years. When I was little, she would always tell me about how sick her patients were and I could not imagine what they were going through. Hearing her stories made me want to take care of them just like my mom and bring them comfort. I decided to apply for the Allied Health program during my senior year of high school so that I could shadow healthcare professionals in a hospital setting.

My feet felt like they were plastered to the floor, not knowing where to go or who to talk to. Timidly, I approached the nurses' station trying to grab someone's attention.

"Excuse me?" I asked the nurse's aide over the counter that loomed over her. She looked up with a bored look in her eye and a frowned expression.

"Um, I am one of the Allied Health high school students and I'm supposed to shadow someone. Is there anyone that I can shadow for the next hour?"

The nurse seems annoyed that I am inconveniencing her with the task of finding a nurse like I was an insect pestering her. Looking up and down the hallway, she said, “Try Erin over there. She just started her shift. The one with the short, dark hair.”

“Thank you,” I said and went into the direction where Erin was.

Erin had tanned skin and jet black hair like the aide had told me. It was perfectly curled into a short bob cut just above her shoulders and her makeup was beautifully done. Her stature was short and she was scribbling on a piece of paper in front of her portable computer which lit up her face with a white light. She looked up from whatever she was writing as I approached her.

“Hi,” I said shyly, “I’m Molly. I’m one of the Allied Health students. I was wondering if I could shadow you?”

“Of course,” she said with a bright smile. “How long are you here for?”

“Just until 9:00. So about an hour.”

“Unfortunately, you won’t get to see much because we’re just giving the patients their meds right now, which could take a while. You’ll get to see at least two or three patients though.”

“Sounds good! Thank you,” I replied.

I followed Erin down the long hallway to where the med room was. She scanned her ID and I followed her into the brightly lit room. On the left side of the room were machines that had locks on them and required a thumbprint to open it. Along the other side of the wall, there was a sink and some saline bags with long plastic tubes.

“Do you know what this is called?” asked Erin, as she scanned her thumb on the oval-shaped blue light. I shook my head no.

“It’s called a Pyxis machine. It keeps all the medicine locked up and one at a time, the doors will open so I can get the medicine for each patient.”

One by one, the doors kept opening with a pop. It was so fascinating to watch. It's like the machine had a mind of its own. I lost count of how many doors opened.

Erin began explaining to me medications such as beta blockers, heparin, and insulin. Reaching into my scrub pocket, I took out my notebook and pencil to write down what she was telling me. My hand quickly jotted down bullet points about the facts of each one. As she was organizing the pills, my knee started to stiffen up and my lower back began to ache. I discreetly kicked my knee up to try to relieve the pain and stood up straighter to crack my back. Erin kept talking about insulin but I could not fully concentrate because of the pain.

There is a second reason why I wanted to become a nurse. When I was nine-years-old, I myself got sick with cancer. My diagnosis was osteosarcoma which is a type of bone cancer and the tumor had developed in my right femur. Going through treatment was the most difficult thing I have ever done in my life. I went through a total of twelve surgeries and nine months of intense chemotherapy. My nurses helped me get through it, though. They did everything for me. My nurses got me juice when I was thirsty, they encouraged me to eat even when I did not want to, and held my hand when I was in pain. I knew I wanted to be just like them when I grew up. I wanted to help kids like me.

However, once I went into remission, I was no longer the same person physically and emotionally. Initially, I could barely walk around half the block without getting tired. I worked

hard in physical therapy to increase my stamina, but even today it is not like how it was before I got sick. I had a lot of back problems because my growth plates were taken out, resulting in my legs being two different lengths. The surgeries performed on my leg make my knee stiffen up easily and I cannot stand for long periods of time. This is what made it so hard to stand there in the med room, listening to Erin.

“Alright, let’s go give these patients their meds,” Erin said cheerfully.

I held the door for her as she carried a handful of pills all different shapes and sizes to her portable computer. She pushed the computer across the hall to the room of our first patient. The door was ajar and when we stepped in, the sounds of soft chuckles came from the patient in the bed and another nurse who was already in there.

“Good morning,” Erin said to the patient, “My name is Erin and I’m going to be your nurse for the day.”

The patient smiled, but unfortunately, that did not last long. Due to patient confidentiality, I cannot reveal what her medical condition was or what happened. All I can say is that being in the patient’s room was an emotional experience. Seeing her so sad and sick brought me back to the time when I was in the hospital. The smells, the lights, the monitors. It all reminded me of when I was diagnosed. As I stood in that room, I felt like I was suffocating. I could just picture myself back in that hospital bed, feeling just as sick as this patient. Bile rose in the back of my throat. To focus my attention elsewhere, I tried to listen to what Erin was teaching me and kept my head down towards my notebook.

After spending at least fifteen minutes in each patient’s room, I was in so much pain and was ready to leave my clinical rotation. I could not fathom how Erin could do this as her job.

She lifted patients into bed, she was on her feet all day, and she watched her patients suffer.

Standing there for an hour was hard- I could not even imagine a twelve-hour shift as a nurse...

...Tears streamed down my face as I buried my head into the soft comforter of my parents' bed. I could not control my sobs. My lungs tightened up and my breaths became faster. I curled my fingers around the covers until my knuckles turned white.

"Molly, you have to tell us what's wrong. We can't help you unless you tell us what's going on," my mom said with my dad standing next to her. Lifting my head from the blanket, I tried to catch my breath and uttered the words I did not want to admit.

"I don't think I want to do n-nursing anymore," I choked out. "And I'm worried it's too late since I already applied to college."

My parents did not say anything for a minute. I think they were stunned and confused.

"What happened? I thought you liked Allied Health," my mom asked.

"I do, but I'm in so much pain just walking around and it's so hard to see the patients so sick. Everything just reminds me of when I was in the hospital. I-I don't think I could handle that for the rest of my life," I explained, my face soaked with tears from the reality of it all.

"Well, it's definitely not too late to apply to college. You can email the admission offices of all the schools you already applied to and change your major. We can also look into more colleges since you aren't looking at nursing schools anymore," my dad said, always so optimistic.

I wiped away my tears and my brain was trying to put a puzzle together of what my dad was saying.

“But what will I major in? I don’t want to just choose something random that I might hate,” I replied.

“You can apply as undeclared,” he said, “You’ll take some gen eds and then you can get a feel for what you like.”

“Will I fall behind?”

“No, no. Everyone has to take gen eds anyway,” my dad explained.

This changed everything and my thoughts were spiraling. Nursing was no longer an option for me because of the limitation with my knee and back. I knew there was no possible way to pursue a career that required me to stand on my feet for a twelve-hour shift. Emotionally, it would be too hard to see patients sick because I know the pain they are going through. What would I major in? Computer Science? Psychology? English? What college will I go to? Before, I was only looking at nursing schools. Now, it is like my entire life is a clean slate. There are doors open to endless possibilities. I had no plans for my future and the idea of that was terrifying. Yet, I felt my entire body relax and my breaths became steady again.

“Molly, are you sure you want to do this?” my mom asked.

I nodded and smiled.

“Will you guys take me to the college fair on Tuesday?”