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IM8
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Final Clinical Reflection

Getting to work in the NICU for my preceptorship was one of the most formative experiences that I had during nursing school. I was surprised, on my first day, to find how much I really loved the NICU. I had suspected that I would end up working within pediatrics in some form or fashion, but I felt a bit nervous about the NICU and the higher acuity patients. What I discovered was that I loved the flow of the day, the “open floorplan” set-up, and the ability to get to know patients and families over time. In fact, I am pleased to say that I have been able to get a job at the OU Children’s Hospital NICU in Oklahoma, and so I will be able to further discover my passion for this population.

The preceptorship was also very enlightening. It brought to light some areas that I naturally excel in as well as some areas that I will continue to develop further as I continue my journey through nursing.

One area that I found that I worked really naturally in was in building relationships and rapport with the families. For me, I know that when a person feels seen and valued, that any following interactions will be that much smoother. Additionally, I never want to get away from remembering that the patients and families are all people! There might be a whole list of tasks to be done, AND, more thorough care will be given and received when the patient and family understand that they are emotionally safe.

I also advocated for my patients well. For example, when I saw that the prongs on a patient’s nose appeared a bit brownish-red, I talked with my nurse about it. When she said that she already looked at the one and it looked fine, I re-worded my concern to communicate more clearly. RT was called to assess and they chose to switch the patient to the face mask, agreeing that it didn’t look right. In that case, I could have simply deferred my suspicion due to my lower status and smaller body of experience, but I chose to stand up for my patient that was barely 4 pounds. The end result was teamwork that achieved a desired result.

I also encountered some areas that I am excited to build my body of knowledge and ability in. The first is assessments. I found that I sometimes get nervous while doing an assessment, thereby forgetting how to easily and confidently flow through the assessment. This is particularly true in regard to heart sounds and lung sounds. In the NICU, so many of the patients have some sort of respiratory challenge, typically RDS, or cardiac abnormality, such as ASDs and VSDs. Being able to differentiate what sounds normal, or WDL, versus what is an abnormal finding- and knowing the correct terminology for each scenario- will come with more and more practice.

I felt that the preceptorship capstone project was really useful. It helped to cement skills, grow my clinical judgement, and further accustom me to working in a hospital setting. I am looking forward to beginning my own job in March. Having had this experience in the NICU will undoubtedly give me a boost in my level of confidence as I work in a new facility. Though there may be some differences in policy, the overall care provided will be the same. I’m excited!