

I came into clinical excited because I have a background in mental health. Even with going to school at UIUC for clinical psychology was a great experience for me to understand and study mental health, but never got any hands-on experience with patients because they don't allow students to shadow psychotherapists. My first day on the unit, I noticed my cohort was very timid and scared. I took the lead and started conversing with patients. Two students even asked to watch me as I interacted with one. I thought it was important to lead and show them that these are just people. Right away when my patient started talking, I could see that he had a flight of ideas. The patient also spoke to a person named Carl that he thought was sitting right next to us. Learning about mental illness and being involved in the treatment process are two completely different things. For me, this experience showed me that I see my patients as just people. Yes, they may have a mental illness, but getting to know them as people helps you understand how that mental illness plays into their personality and background. This in turn, helps the outcome of treatment because you can better understand what's going on. This experience really solidified the fact that I want to work specialize in the mental health field. One thing about this experience that didn't surprise me was the revolving number of patients that get admitted from being homeless or living in a homeless shelter. I know the statistics regarding mental health and homelessness. Seeing the individuals who came in and told me their story makes those statistics more real which is pretty sad to see. Nobody wants to think we have a healthcare system that is failing, but mental health has never gotten the resources or the respect that physical systems of health get. All in all, I can see the struggles that plague the mental health system due to underfunding and lack of resources but I want to join the people that try their hardest to get proper mental health care to those in need.