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GWU Hunt School of Nursing Recognizes DNP Student During Celebration of Nursing Profession

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Communications

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Jason W. DeFreitas, '21, has Leadership Role During COVID-19 Crisis

As a clinical supervisor at Atrium Health-Lincoln, Jason Wesley DeFreitas, '21, helps his colleagues and patients manage the challenges of the Coronavirus pandemic. The Gardner-Webb University graduate student is one of three supervisors on a 30-bed medical-surgical unit.

He is responsible for managing 80 health care teammates, including registered nurses and health care technicians. “We care for a diverse population of patients, ranging from pediatrics to geriatric,” he related. “I serve as charge nurse some days, attend facility leadership meetings other days, and act a fill-in unit educator for now.”



Before the Coronavirus pandemic began, 2020 was designated as the “Year of the Nurse.” The declaration by the World Health Assembly celebrates the 200th anniversary of the birth of Florence Nightingale, the founder of nursing. Further, the American Nurses Association, which traditionally observes National Nurses Week May 6-12, has expanded the recognition to the entire month of May.



While the Gardner-Webb University Hunt School of Nursing recognizes the excellence of its students, faculty and staff on a daily basis, National Nurses Month is a time to highlight their dedication and commitment to the profession. DeFreitas shares how the pandemic has affected his job and what he’s learned from his classes in the Hunt School of Nursing’s Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program.

Q: Why did you choose nursing as a career?

DeFreitas: My mother is a nurse, and she encouraged me to explore the profession. Her guidance and wisdom through the years has made me think about why I do what I do instead of just what I do on a daily basis.

Q: How has your job changed since the pandemic began?

DeFreitas: I am keeping my staff members calm about the daily reported cases of COVID-19 in our county and facility, as well as informed about the latest information about COVID-19 and what Atrium Health is doing systemwide to educate teammates and combat the virus. Being a leader requires keeping your team informed with the right information so that panic and rumors don't swell within the unit.

Q: What kinds of health concerns do the patients have?

DeFreitas: As a clinical supervisor, my direct patient care is limited as I am providing care assistance to my fellow floor nursing personnel. From what I have heard from patients during or after leadership rounding, they are concerned about a surge that overwhelms hospital facilities here in the South, like the situation in New York or Detroit. They question if we are prepared to handle an influx of patients should a spike occur. Also, many just wonder when life will return to 'normal.' Many patients and their families have had to alter their lives in a radical way because of the COVID-19 virus. Staying home more often, making decisions when and where to go out if home supplies are needed, and when will they return to work, are factors related to the health status of themselves and those around them.

Q: What has the pandemic taught you about patient care, patient interaction or a new way of medical practice?

DeFreitas: One thing I have learned through this pandemic season is that the general population doesn't fully comprehend their role in infection prevention. For example: Wash hands for 20 seconds. Cough into your elbow NOT your hands. Restrict movement. Respect social distancing. Being around groups of people makes you at risk for spreading germs. Finding new ways to educate patients and families concerning the basics of prevention hygiene is a return to the fundamentals of nursing care.

Q: How have your classes inspired the work you do?

DeFreitas: My DNP professors have always encouraged me to think outside the box, because healthcare is a complex system made up of many moving parts, which dictates that learning and instruction are delivered in many ways to the patients we care for as well as the families. Of the classes I have taken thus far at GWU, my assignments, discussion board questions, and projects have all had real-world application that is vital to the progression of healthcare in this country and beyond.

Q: What topic in the DNP program has been the most helpful as you care for patients?

DeFreitas: The application of evidence-based research. When new discoveries are made through the power of research and then implemented at the bedside, I have found this

technique most helpful. Educating my patients about a newer and safer way of performing a healthcare related task or assessment, shows my patients that 'I do my homework,' and that I'm always looking for the best ways to care for them.

Q: Thinking about 2020 as the Year of the Nurse and the 200th anniversary of nursing, what are your thoughts about the profession you have entered?

Defreitas: I feel that the nursing profession is built for moments like this in our history. We have been the most-trusted profession for many years now, and It's time we showed people, our country and the world why. I feel honored to be in a profession that helps others. Our therapeutic nursing ways truly help people lead and live better lives.

[Learn more about the Hunt School of Nursing.](#)