

**Why Do You Work Here?**  
**Intrinsic Benefits of Working in Rural Health Care**  
**Psyc330-Human Development**

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One of the first days that my mom was working as a night shift nurse in the emergency room at Our Lady of Victory Hospital (OLVH) in the small town of Stanley, my uncle, who was the lead ambulance worker for over forty years, didn't expect to see her when he came through the doors with a patient. "Why on Earth would you want to work here?" he asked in surprise, knowing that she had come from formerly working at a prestigious clinic in a nearby city. He just couldn't understand her desire to move to a rural community and work at a small critical access facility. I, however, could.

I've always wanted to go into the medical field but was a little hesitant because it seems like there is so much involved in working in a hospital or clinic without much compensation. When I think about nursing and any interaction that I have had with the nursing staff, it seems like they aren't paid nearly enough for all they do. Working in an environment where sickness and death is an every day occurrence seems very depressing. To me it almost seems not worth it, but listening to little stories of touching moments has helped me to change my view. While being home over winter break, the stories I heard my mom tell definitely are a sign of how much she loves her job, and I can understand why.

One of the benefits of working in a hospital in a small community is that bonds usually will form between patients and caregivers. Due to many patients staying for long-term healthcare, caregivers get to know their patients pretty well, and try to do things for them that will put them at ease, motivate them, and even help speed up their recovery. One such instance was when a lady in her 70's was in and out of the hospital for months while undergoing chemo therapy, and she had definitely won the hearts of her caregivers.

Like a lot of people living in Wisconsin, this lady was an avid Green Bay Packers fan and Brett Favre was her hero. During one stay at OLVH, it seemed as though she was at a particularly low point in her recovery. Not to be one that refused treatment, she continued to press on and would do anything to help recover. Two of the physical therapists decided that they would help motivate her and showed up dressed in Minnesota Vikings apparel. Feeling especially nauseated and weak, they weren't sure how she would handle physical therapy that day. However, when she saw them enter the room, the first thing that she said was, "I thought I was sick before, but now I'm really sick. Get out until you're cheering for the right team!" This had brought a spark into her, and when they had quickly changed into "more appropriate" Packer apparel, she was more motivated to participate in the physical therapy. The teamwork involved in caring for her didn't stop there though.

Later that night, the nursing staff was thinking up ways that they could somehow get the Packers to do something for this lady. They decided to write to the Packers and tell her story. Meanwhile, she was about to be transferred to a larger facility for more extensive treatment. On the day that she was to transfer, a package came in the mail for her. But since she would return three days later, the nursing staff decided to wait until she returned before giving her the package. When she did return, they gave her the box, and inside were three items that she would treasure forever: a picture of the team, a lapel pin, and a personally signed card from Brett Favre himself. She was so grateful and from then on would brag about how OLVH had the best healthcare team in the state. The healthcare team, on the other hand, was just grateful that they could help what might be her last few months of life brighter due to a little act of kindness on their part.

Reflecting on this story, I think about all that was done by the nursing staff on her behalf. Not only did they do the normal routine practices that come along with being a healthcare provider, but they took the extra step to encourage a patient struggling to live just a little longer. What was encouraging to me was that there was no real outward benefit on the staff's part, but working as a team helped them help others. Also, the joy I saw in my mom's face when she told me the story really expressed how rewarding it was for her to see this patient so happy. That is the kind of job satisfaction that I hope to experience one day myself. According to Berk, intrinsic satisfaction correlates positively with age (Berk, page 534). I would agree with this thought because I can see that as my mom has gotten older, she seems to love her job more and more. I think contributing to this is the fact that her kids are older now and she doesn't need to be as involved in our lives as much, so she has taken it upon herself to get more involved at work instead. In doing so, she has benefited greatly, feeling a genuine joy.

Another aspect of working in a small community is that she has known some of the patients that she has had to care for on a more personal level. Her all-time favorite story that I have heard her tell over and over is of a patient whose life she actually helped save. Since at night there are far fewer people in the building than during the day, the nursing staff is alerted to people arriving at the emergency room doors by an alarm. At about two in the morning, a couple in their sixties was at the door. When asked what was wrong, the wife exclaimed that her husband was having a diabetic reaction. As the charge nurse that night, my mom rushed down to the Emergency Room doors to let them in. When she got there, she realized that she knew the couple, and it wasn't a diabetic reaction the man was experiencing, but something far worse.

For my mom, it was difficult to see this patient because he was the father of one of her best friends from high school. As his face became paler and paler and he complained of chest pains, my mom rushed him into a room to hook him up to a heart monitor. Sure enough, he was in the middle of having a heart attack. Since OLVH is a rural critical access center, most patients end up being shipped out to a larger hospital by ambulance or helicopter. In this case, however, there was no time. The man was about to die, and my mom's heart started to sink.

Quickly, mandatory procedures were done to try and revive the man. It seemed though that the normal protocol was not working, and everyone, even the on-call doctor, was getting nervous. Tension and anxiety was rising in the room and it seemed that they weren't going to be able to save the poor man. Then my mom suggested trying administering a different kind of drug that wasn't normally used in this situation. As color came back into the man's face and his heart rhythm slowly went back to a normal rate, the emergency team had realized that by pulling together, they were able to save this man's life. When he was stable and ready to be transferred for additional care, my mom ran to her office and grabbed a "Nurse Barbie" sticker and put it on the man, and said to tell the staff that "Nurse Barbie (my mom being named Barb) had sent him." The man smiled and winked, saying "Thanks you so much. I couldn't have made it through without you!"

I know that my mom will always remember that night and those kind words. She tells me that it is moments like that that make her job worth it. A couple weeks ago (roughly two years since that incident), my mom ran into the couple and was definitely glad to see the man alive and doing well. What really touched her, though, was when the

man's wife said that when he recovered from his heart attack and came home, they took the Nurse Barbie sticker and stuck it on a magnet. It has been hanging on their refrigerator ever since, and has been the center of many conversations at their home. The good feeling she got after being told that will stick with her forever.

As I reflect on these stories and others that I have heard over the years, I think about how great it must be to work in an environment where teamwork and a desire to help people come together in such a strong partnership. Although there are situations that are encountered in a hospital setting where it seems like nothing is in the medical team's control and there are days when it just doesn't seem like the pay is enough for all that is done, the intrinsic benefits of how the team can help change the lives of others by doing such little things is very encouraging. Asking any of the staff working at OLVH why they work there, a common answer was "Why wouldn't I? I wouldn't change it for the world!" The words of the following poem sum up what is an everyday occurrence at the hospital.

*The Door*

*(Reflection for those who work in the ED)*

*By Mark Darby*

*There is a door where I work-A door to the outside.*

*You never know who will come through the door; but when someone does, I help them.  
That is what I do.*

*Quickly, I assess and treat, listen and respond, and when I have done all I can do, I  
watch and wait and hope.*

*Sometimes a challenge comes through the door and I learn something new.*

*Sometimes, funny things come through that door, and I feel lighter.*

*Sometimes tragedy comes through the door, and I feel sad.*

*And sometimes, a miracle comes through the door, and I feel awe.*

*There are days when I feel I can handle anything that comes through the door.*

*And there are days when I want to quit. The paperwork and the bureaucracy get to me.*

*On these days I seek out others who work with me and share some tears and some  
laughter. Then I feel better.*

*And I go back to work and answer the door.*