

## Alina Vogel



I didn't plan on working as a geriatric nurse when I was finishing nursing school. I had done my clinical orientation at St. Gertrude's and really enjoyed it there, so I applied for the job. I got the job and have been working with the elderly ever since.

I am currently pursuing my Bachelor's degree and would like to go on for my Masters and become a Nurse Practitioner. I would like to continue working with the elderly whether it be in a hospital or long term care setting. I enjoy helping this vulnerable population.

I hope to impact this population by helping them have a voice. I want to support the elderly in the decisions that they want to make about their own care. I would like to be able to use a holistic approach to treat the mind, body, and spirit of my patients. I want my patients to feel that I am a good listener, thorough, and an advocate for them. I had an elderly patient who was in the dying stage and was unresponsive. Her granddaughter was with her and after a couple of days of staying by the patient's bedside, she starting questioning whether she should continue to be there. I spoke with the granddaughter on many occasions and she opened up to me about her frustration that other family members were not coming to see her grandmother. She was upset because she needed someone there for her. I did very little talking and a lot of listening, I encouraged her to continue to stay if that is what she felt in her heart. The following day after I spoke with her, the granddaughter told me that the patient had called out her daughter's name (this was the granddaughter's deceased mother) multiple times during the night. Her eyes filled with tears as she thanked me for listening to her and telling her that it was alright to feel frustrated and still stay with her grandmother. The following day, the patient passed away with her granddaughter at her side. The granddaughter expressed much gratitude and said that it would give her peace to know that her grandmother did not die alone. Although, I cannot say how much this impacted the patient, hearing is the last sense to go and I am sure she knew her granddaughter was right there with her. More so, her granddaughter needed a lot of support from the nursing staff to assure her that her way of grieving was appropriate. I know that she will never forget the experience, as neither will I.

I once had a patient who was very aggressive and demanding toward staff. Most nurses had a difficult time getting him to take his medications, some of which were his mood stabilizers. There would be much debate when the patient would ask for his pills and occasionally he would try to swing at me if I approached him too closely. It was a frustrating situation because I knew the patient needed his medication to help control his aggression. After caring for this patient for a few days, I took the time to speak to his family to learn more about him. From observation and our conversations I learned that he loved to make a deal. When I would come into his room, he would always refuse his medications. He also always had a request for something; usually it was a snack or a drink. Since he enjoyed making deals, I would tell him that as soon as he took his pills first, I would go get him whatever it was that he requested. Many times he hesitated because he thought I wouldn't be back, but he learned that I would come back every time with what he needed. This made it very easy for him to comply with his medication and be able to participate in therapies because he was taking his mood stabilizers and pain

medication. Soon I started teaching other nurses about the approach and we were better able to approach the patient and meet his needs.