

Rashada Allen

Hi, my name's Rashada and if you're looking for a chance to gain some experience working in an acute care facility, alongside nurses and other health care team members providing pt care, then I'd like to take a few minutes to share with you about my experience, as a VALOR student at the (Seattle) VA Hospital.

I began working as a VALOR student on a medical-surgical, oncology floor in the summer of 2006, and during that time I was assigned two preceptors who were both really great mentors. They both helped extend my knowledge about nursing and they also helped me implement the knowledge that I gained from nursing school and to apply it to the nursing world. Working on the floor I had opportunities to observe different procedures like doctors performing thoracentesis at the patient's bedside, I was also able watch the IV nurses place PICC lines & also got to accompany pts off the floor for various procedures like a CAT scan or a biopsy, I also got to interact & speak with other speak with a couple of other disciplines that are involved with pt care and I got a chance to speak with like physicians, speech therapists, occupational therapists & I feel that the time I got to interact with them really helped me to feel what it's like to work as a nurse and get involved with the whole, entire health care team.

On the floor, I started taking care of two patients and I eventually worked my way up to taking care of four patients. I did all the total care for the patients. I assisted with (Activities of Daily Living) ADLs, I passed out meds I also looked thru the patients charts, looked for critical lab values, was able speak with the physicians and alert them to that (lab values.) I also did head to toe assessments, looked at (physicians') orders and did such things as placing foley catheters, removing them; hanging and starting IVs, tube feedings, wound care, dressing changes, anything that was ordered; I was doing that (for the patient) alongside my preceptor. As I reflect back on my VALOR experience, I learned a lot because there was a lot to learn. I learned about prioritizing, knowing which patients to go check on first, I learned about delegation and I also learned about time management which was a huge thing! Working as a nursing student, you take care of one or two patients, but working on the floor (as an RN), you have more like four to five patients to care for. So again I learned a lot about time management, making sure I could get all my patient care done in the eight hour shift that I was on, and also learning how to deal with changes in patients' conditions. Because sometimes you have a plan as to how you expect things will work out, but when there is a change in the patient's condition, you have to learn (to respond accordingly) and adapt, and that's something that I learned (as a VALOR) at the VA Hospital.

I also had a great support on 2 West; they were really helpful to me, answering all my questions. I never felt like I was left alone because there was always somebody there to help me out. Also as I think back on my VALOR experience, I really feel that it helped prepare me for my second year of clinicals in nursing school. I felt a lot more confident about my skills and interacting with physicians and whoever else was involved with the patient's care. I also feel that the VALOR experience helped prepare me too for the NCLEX exam. I was able to recognize different procedures and different (presented) on the NCLEX because I'd actually had the chance to experience doing those things, or observe them, so I was a lot more knowledgeable going in to take the NCLEX.

So if you're looking to further your education, your clinical nursing and critical thinking skills, I would highly recommend that you apply for the VALOR Program. This is a great place to work, it has great staff and you're going to learn a lot. My decision to apply to work for the Seattle VA was hugely

influenced by my VALOR experience. Currently, I work as an RN on the floor where I had my VALOR experience and I really, really enjoy it - I think you would too.

Thank you for your time!