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As graduation is getting closer and closer, my role as a RN is getting closer as well. This semester working as an exter has increased my confidence tremendously! My time management skills continue to improve as I realize that the best time to get a task done is right now. Throughout my day I am able to prioritize my care and it is becoming easier to know which tasks take first priority. At the beginning of this semester I felt as though my skills were fairly strong, it was just all the other organizational stuff that I needed to fine tune. Figuring out which pharmacist and which number to call when I had a problem with a medication, knowing how to get orders written or changed for my patients, and learning policies of the VA for patient care are all examples of things that I learned related to how the VA is organized.

I am able to teach patients skills that they need to know in order to achieve their rehab goals as well as explain to patients and other students they physiology of why we do things that we do. I feel comfortable with passing the medications, hanging IVs, tube feedings, drsg changes and assessments, all skills that I have wanted to work on this semester (I've gotten faster at it too!). I've also built relationships with the PAs and the MDs so that I'm not as intimidated by them as much and feel more comfortable asking them questions or letting them know information that I feel is important. I feel much more like a team member than just a student learning on the unit.

I do know that I have many areas to improve on as well though. I still overlook/forget tasks that I need to accomplish during the shift (ie sending UAC&S, cytology, or stool samples) or when I did drsg changes and needed to measure the wounds, I measured the main one, but did not measure the smaller ones. I think that what I need to do is to make my list at the beginning of the shift and go over it with the RN to make sure I am not missing anything, and then just constantly check my list to see what else I need to do. This meeting with the RN will also help me to see if I'm on track with what I think my responsibilities are compared to what she thinks they are. It will be as though I am orienting myself to being an RN!

As I get closer to working as an RN, I also get scared because I feel as though I don't know much of the pathophysiology of a spinal cord injury. I did not go through the SCI classes that the unit offers to valors or new SCI employees so I was starting to panic because I felt as though there was so much information that I was going to need to know as an RN and I didn't know where to start. Luckily though, after talking with Lori, our CNS, she assured me that I would get to go through the SCI classes with Kathy Dunn where I would learn anything and everything I needed to know about spinal cord. Never in my life have I been so excited to hear that I have to take classes and sit through hospital orientation!!! This made me feel so much better because I feel as though they will prepare me with the information I need to be an even better nurse!

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