

a day in the life of a nurse

Latisha Coleman, R.N.

Patient. Paperwork. Call light. Patient.

Often portrayed as routine, a nurse's workday hardly follows a predictable pace. Balancing the demands of patients and their families with the requirements of the nursing profession calls for a quick-thinking and quick-footed individual.

Since 2000, registered nurse Latisha Coleman, 33, has delivered comforting words and medical care to her cardiac patients at Elmhurst Memorial Hospital. Following is a 12-hour account of one recent Friday.

WRITTEN BY **KARA HOEGER**
NURSE PICTURED **LATISHA COLEMAN**

By nature, nurses nurture. Before Coleman tends to patients, she makes sure her children Brandon, 11, and Arielle, 4, are set to begin their day at school. Helping her children get dressed, feeding them and asking if they need anything before they leave is a natural extension of what Coleman provides to each of her patients.

7:04 am Latisha collects patient reports from an overnight nurse

Upon arrival on the unit, Coleman familiarizes herself with her four assigned patients or "team" for the day. Providing continuous care involves collecting reports from her patients' overnight nurse. She specifically wants to know about mobility activity, heart monitor readings and medications.

Coleman frequently checks patients' charts on the computer for new physician orders and lab results, which may alter her patients' plans of care. She notices that Mr. K's hemoglobin levels are not within the "normal" range. Coleman places a call to Mr. K's physician to ask about a blood transfusion.

8:03 am Latisha retrieves medication from Pyxis, which is an automated medication-dispensing machine

Prior to administering medications, Coleman assesses each patient from head to toe. During her assessments, she asks the patients if they slept well, examines any incisions and answers questions about their healthcare.

Coleman spends additional time throughout the day educating patients ready to go home. "I explain how to take cardiac medications, which signs and symptoms to look for, and when it's important to call their physicians," Coleman says.

In between patient care, Coleman makes a trip to the cafeteria. Even on break, Coleman's patients remain top priority. For instance, when a "Code Blue" is called, every available nurse responds to assist with a patient in cardiac arrest.

11:15 am Latisha discusses a patient's plan of care with the attending physician. Coleman often consults with physicians over the phone or in person. "As nurses, we are their eyes and ears at the bedside," she says. "Physicians depend on our assessment skills, and many times they make decisions on their patients' care based on the urgent issues we discuss."

Delivering healthcare requires constant collaboration with the physician and other healthcare providers, the patients and their families. Coleman explains her conversation with the physician to Mr. K. and his spouse, and then she obtains consent from Mr. K. before starting a blood transfusion.

4:27 pm Latisha cares for patients' medical and psychological needs

Part of checking patients' medical needs includes being aware of their psychological state.

"I talked to a patient in her early 20s who felt discouraged about pursuing nursing school because she was told it probably wasn't very realistic given her illness," Coleman says. "To rally her spirits, I explained to her that since there are many opportunities in nursing, she shouldn't give up her dream."

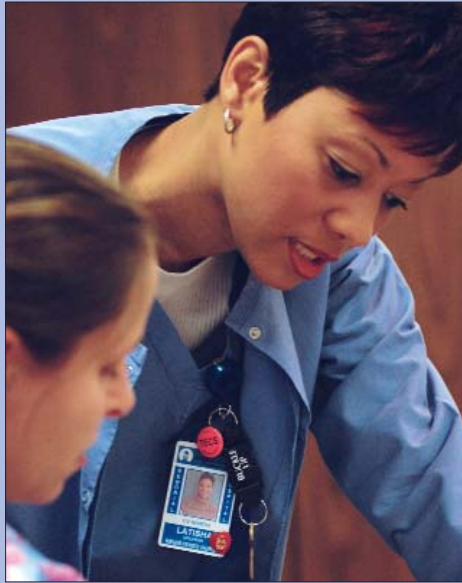
At the end of Coleman's shift, she informs her patients that a new nurse will take her place overnight and asks if they need anything before she leaves. She'll return tomorrow.

The Elmhurst Memorial Center for Health will host a Medical Career Fair on Wednesday, March 9, from 6 – 9 pm. Students and their parents can visit with an EMH nurse and other healthcare professionals to learn more about their careers and the education required. Please see page 18 for more information or call CareMatch at 630.782.7878.

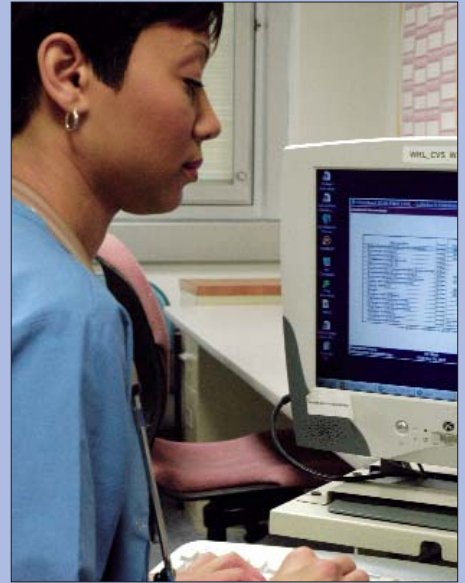
5:00 am



7:04 am



7:48 am



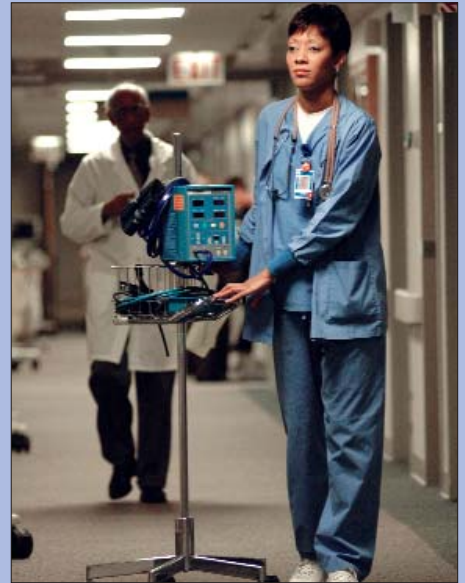
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9:30 am



10:00 am



11:15 am



4:27 pm



7:05 pm

