

TLP – The Loop Podcast

Episode 14

Segment: From PCA to Nursing Care Technician thanks to NCT scholarship

Featuring: Sue Strup and Joshua Hamilton

Recorded: October 5, 2021

Sue Strup:

Hello, I'm Sue Strup, senior career consultant with UK HealthCare's Career Center and co-coordinator of the nursing care tech. scholarship program. Welcome to The Loop Podcast. I am joined by Josh Hamilton, today, one of our nursing care tech. scholarship recipients. Josh, can you tell us a little bit about your background and how you got interested in working in health care?

Joshua Hamilton:

Yeah, so I am from Winchester, Kentucky, and I went to Eastern Kentucky University. I have a degree in Health Sciences; which was mostly involved exercise science. For a long time, I was a personal trainer and that was okay for a while, but then I kind of got disinterested in it. I actually got a job at UK right when the pandemic hit and I got a job as a PCA, that was my fastest way to get my foot in the door.

I started as a PCA and then I started seeing what the techs were doing and got interested in nursing and that is kind of how I got started working in health care.

Sue Strup:

Great. For our audience, can you say what a PCA is? What does that mean?

Joshua Hamilton:

Yeah, it is a patient clerical assistant and basically you do day to day task involved with nursing. Anything that has to do with stroke alerts or any type of traumas that come in; we notify all of the appropriate personnel that come in. We file stuff, we help with patient orders, and it is mostly just clerical tasks; answering the phone, coordinating where people need to go.

Sue Strup:

Working during the pandemic and working in our emergency department, level one trauma center, how exciting is that? What actually is the UK HealthCare Nursing Care Tech Scholarship program and why did you apply?

Joshua Hamilton:

It's usually a two-week program but during the pandemic, mine was I think two months long. It was quite a while, but it really helped out because of my heavy work schedule during the pandemic. It's a class and you learn all about the role of what a nursing care tech would do and once that – its kind of like a school class. We had Zoom calls twice a week and we would go over everything we learned and we would have tests and then once you complete the course, we take a state exam to get your nurses license – the tech nursing certification license.

Sue Strup:

What did the scholarship provide you with? Was it money and what was involved after you found out that you had been awarded the scholarship?

Joshua Hamilton:

It's \$850 scholarship. Mine was through UK College of Nursing. That's when I was specifically wanted to go and you can kind of choose it to depend on which one you are applying for and the SRNA certification scholarship kind of applies to which one you choose and that also covers the CPR course which – mine was through Jane Lynch, who has an office somewhere in town. You just have to show up and do the course and get certified right there that day.

Sue Strup:

Wow. Does someone need – I know you said you previously had worked for UK HealthCare in the emergency department in a patient clerical assistant position, but does someone need to work in health care to apply for this scholarship program?

Joshua Hamilton:

No, you can work at Starbucks really, I mean, you can work anywhere; I just happened to work at UK and I just heard about it through other people.

Sue Strup:

That's wonderful. Did you find that the state registered nursing assistant course was very challenging or difficult?

Joshua Hamilton:

Not really, I had a lot of experience prior through ECU with anatomy and physiology, so it was a little bit of a refresher. Especially the two-week course, it can be a little bit strenuous because it is a lot of information in a short amount of time but it's not that bad.

Sue Strup:

Wow that is great. Are you obligated to work for UK HealthCare because you were a scholarship recipient?

Joshua Hamilton:

Yes, as soon as your orientation ends, when you're hired on as a nursing tech somewhere in UK, you have to work here for a year.

Sue Strup:

Great, so you are working here in the emergency department which is fantastic, but I know you've got other scholars that are working in other areas; including I think, our Kentucky Children's Hospital, Markey Cancer Center and other medical, surgical floors. Josh, did you receive a pay increase from your role when you went from a patient clerical assistant to a nursing care technician?

Joshua Hamilton:

Yes, so I started at about \$12.20 an hour, I'd say and that's plus shift differential. So, the way the shifts are usually set are – you work three-twelves, which I like. You get four days off which is awesome. If you work overnight like me, so you would clock in at 6:45 p.m. and leave around 7:15 a.m., you get shift differential for working those rough hours. So, it is usually around \$2 an hour difference and once I became a tech it went up to \$15.20 plus shift differential; so it can honestly on a weekend night go up to \$18 an hour.

Sue Strup:

I know you probably might have future goals beyond just being a nursing care tech. Can you talk a little bit about your future goals?

Joshua Hamilton:

Yeah. After you know, being a tech – the sole reason why I wanted to be a tech was to see if I would like it, like nursing and I ended up really liking it a lot. My goal is to start in fall as a second-degree nursing; so, I can go ahead and shift into that position since I have so many of the classes already done. Then, once I am a nurse I'll probably – I will stay at UK because I really like it there. Then after that, who knows, maybe do nurse prac., I don't know.

Sue Strup:

That's awesome. So, becoming a nurse and then possibly a nurse practitioner, that's fantastic. If any of our listeners are interested in applying for the Nursing Care Tech Scholarship Program, how could they find out more information.

Joshua Hamilton:

It's offered twice a year. It's an application process, the deadline for the next scholarship is Friday, December 31st. I had to fill out an application online as well as a consent form. I had two strong letters of recommendation from my

supervisors at UK. There was an interview with two scholarship coordinators; after a week or so I was notified that I got the scholarship.

Sue Strup:

Well, again, congratulations Josh, that is exciting to launch your career as a nursing care technician and obviously working in our exciting emergency department which has really, during this COVID pandemic has been so instrumental in helping getting so many of our patients through and up to our COVID units. Again, thank you, again congratulations and this concludes our Loop Podcast and thank you for joining us today.