How to Gain Work Experience as a New Graduate Nurse

Work experience is a vital step in becoming a clinical nurse. University textbooks and websites can only teach you so much in the field, but nothing can prepare you more than real-world hands-on experience. It is beneficial to learn the skills and knowledge needed, under the guidance of a senior nurse. This is so they can assist you and guide you in ways you may not have been able to do yourself. Having this guidance will allow graduates to be certain of the field of nursing they wish to get into, helping their career progression.

Gaining work experience as a new graduate may sound daunting to some students, but it doesn't have to be. There are many ways to gain experience as a clinical nurse.

- **Volunteer Nurse**
  Although you won't necessarily get paid for becoming a volunteer nurse, it may benefit you highly in the long run. Gaining volunteer experience as a nurse will not only look great on your resume but will provide you with great experience. Volunteering can also introduce you to the specific industry you wish to have a career in. This is when you would meet other nurses who may provide you with useful connections which can help in the search for future job opportunities. Most hospitals will provide volunteer programs, so make sure you are on the lookout for them when they get posted to get in early!

- **AIN When Studying**
  Another option which may be viable to you, is to become an assistant nurse whilst still undergoing your studies. Becoming an assistant in nursing will provide students with skills, knowledge and hands on experience in the field. By becoming an AIN, it will allow you to meet your mentors and create a strong bond with them. These mentors will shape how you experience your jobs and thus have a strong influence on the career path you wish to take. This is beneficial as it allows you to continue and complete your studies whilst still gaining valuable experience which may help the search when looking for graduate jobs.

- **Network**
  Some students may take on the approach of networking to gain experience. The best part about this is that you can still do it when you are studying. Networking can be in many forms, ranging anywhere from attending nursing conferences, taking to the stall holders at career and job fairs and also making sure that your online profiles are up to date. This is relating to LinkedIn, SEEK and even Facebook. The National Student Nurses' Association suggests that current students contact their school's alumni organization before graduating. Another great way to network is to talk to students who have already graduated to let them know you're starting your job search.

- **Look for Graduate Friendly Employers**
  Although it might take more research, finding medical institutions that offer programs that are grad friendly is a great way to gain experience. Some hospitals provide courses and guidance which will allow the graduates to perform their activities in an actual institution. In some cases, hospitals will aim to take on about 10 graduates each year, so it is important that you are constantly on the lookout when these programs get posted. Whether or not the program is in your direct area of study, it is a great way to gain experience, however, there will always be new opportunities to learn from.

- **Further your education**
  Another option that some graduates may take is to continue their studies. Recent studies have concluded that nurses with higher forms of graduation have had better luck in finding jobs. It may be beneficial to even study a wider range of short-term courses in order to build up skills and experience. Finding these kinds of courses can be either done through researching the university websites or talking to your career advisor at university. They will help you choose the right course for you, which will help develop your nursing skills.

Now that you know all the options for ways to gain experience, it is time to decide on which pathway is the best for you. If you are unsure of which direction to take, it is advised to talk to your university team, as they would have a deep understanding on how to find and apply for programs. At the end of the day, it is your career, and it is important to put your own needs first.