

MAY 2023

NURSES

the heart of health care

EMILY SHULLAW ILLUSTRATION, LEE ENTERPRISES



Even though thousands of trained professionals play vital roles in the care of the aging population, many of the unsung heroes of long-term care are the unpaid or informal caregivers who step in to provide assistance to someone they love.

A 2019 study published in the journal *Geriatric Nursing* found approximately 16.6 percent of the United States population age 18 and older self-identify as informal caregivers who provide care for adults with health conditions and disabilities. Assistance needs range from “old age” care requirements for Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias to impaired mobility assistance. Furthermore, Assisting Hands Home Care says roughly six in 10 family caregivers also work full- or part-time.

While it can be a noble effort to step in and provide care to a friend or family member, caregiving can be time-con-

suming and emotionally and physically demanding, particularly for those who also are balancing careers and families. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicates that while some aspects of caregiving can be rewarding, caregivers may be at increased risk for negative health consequences, such as depression and difficulty maintaining healthy lifestyles. These effects may be exacerbated by stresses at work.

The challenges of managing caregiving and a career can be challenging, but it’s not impossible to perform both roles successfully.

- Use company assistance or benefits. Some companies have policies in place that enable a person to handle certain aspects of caregiving more effectively. These can include unpaid Family and Medical Leave Act leave, employee assistance counseling programs, flex time, and even telecommuting capabilities to coordinate work around caregiving.

- Speak with your employer. Employees should be honest with their human resources departments or supervisors about their roles as caregivers. Honest communication can help the employers understand the situations and perhaps find workarounds that will satisfy all needs.

- Get organized. Create a shareable family calendar so that everyone stays up-to-date about caregiving schedules, family appointments, work responsibilities, and other pertinent events. Seeing responsibilities spelled out can help all parties involved divide time accordingly.

- Develop a safety net. Reach out to trusted friends or reliable neighbors who can step in during emergencies when work schedules cannot immediately be adjusted.

- Practice self-care. Self-care is crucial to ensuring a person has the energy to provide quality care to a loved one as

while simultaneously navigating his or her career. Take breaks as needed.

- Consider professional care services. Relying on a home care agency or a skilled nursing facility can be a solution when a person needs to simultaneously work and care for a family member. Individuals also can look into respite care, which is a temporary care situation that enables informal caregivers to get a break for a set time. Respite care is offered through various assisted living facilities.

Informal caregivers can explore various tips for balancing careers with caregiving.

The challenges of managing caregiving and a career can be challenging, but it’s not impossible to perform both roles successfully.



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NURSES

the heart of health care



Andrea Newton

Andrea Newton, FNP is a lifelong resident of Washington County, Virginia. She is the wife of Pyke Newton and is blessed to be mother to three children ages 21, 18 and 15. Her nursing career started by obtaining her Associate Nursing at Virginia Highlands Community College. She continued her education at King University & graduated in August of 22' with a Master's degree, becoming a Family Nurse Practitioner. For the past ten years she has been employed with Ballad Health in the cardiac step down unit, short stay, the catheterization lab, and currently provides nursing care at CVA Heart Institute. She cares for the cardiac and peripheral vascular patients of Dr. Pierre Istfan in the Bristol, TN and Wytheville, VA locations.

She takes pride in giving the best care to her patients and building friendships that last a lifetime. She recently sang at a funeral of a patient, stating the nursing relationship doesn't always stop with their last breath. "Nursing is a relationship. You build it over time by serving people to the best of your ability while adding in a lot of compassion. Patients may not always like to hear what they need to do on their part to improve their own health such as diet and exercise, but it is our duty as healthcare workers to educate them. We try to better educate and support people on how to prevent diseases when possible." Andrea volunteers providing nursing care at the annual medical tent during Trail Days in Damascus, Virginia, and is a volunteer member of the Southwest Virginia Medical Reserve Corp. "Healthcare is a difficult but rewarding career, you have to genuinely love people because someday a sincere smile can be the best medicine."



Natalie Linkous

Why I Became a Nurse?

I chose to become a nurse because it allows me to make a difference in other people's lives by combining my natural desire and empathy to help people. Nursing is a way for me to touch people's lives in a positive way.

As a young child I saw the effects that nurses have on people's lives. I have always been moved by the encouraging words, the small gestures of kindness and the empathy that nurses exhibit. I have always had a compassion to help others. I volunteered as a candy striper when I was a young teen. I have always been fascinated by the medical field.

I have since furthered my career to obtain my MSN, specializing in Mental Health. Being a Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner has allowed me to help others in different way. It is a rewarding experience to be able to help others.



Gretchen Breese

Gretchen Breese, BSN-RN

Clinical Liaison with Amedisys Hospice in Elizabethton. April will be my 3rd year with the company. While many think hospice work can be challenging I can honestly say it is the most rewarding nursing position I have ever had. To be able to assist in coordination of care for people who are often in the most challenging moments of their lives, is truly a blessing and I am humbled every day by the gratitude that these families show myself and our staff.



Kelsey Arrington Johnson

Kelsey is a lifelong resident of Lodi, VA and grew up on a livestock and tobacco farm, where she learned valuable skills that she continues to use in her nursing career. Kelsey enjoys getting to help people in what can be the most difficult but rewarding times of their lives working on New Life Birthing Center at BRMC. In addition to their full-time jobs, Kelsey and her husband, Corey, operate a sheep and cattle farm. They have two dogs, Korrie and Bonni.



Shannon Davis

Shannon Davis is a RN at CVA Heart Institute in Bristol, TN. She helps patients in the heart failure clinic as well as being the office nurse director. She genuinely cares about her patients and gives excellent nursing care.



Jeremy Clevinger

Jeremy Clevinger is a RN at the cath lab in BRMC. He has many years of experience in nursing. He works well under pressure of emergent situations and gives competent care with heart attack patients. He is very knowledgeable and professional.



Jill Minnick

I am a 32 year old nurse currently working at Bristol Regional Medical Center. I am a Specialty Coordinator and I circulate OR cases taking care of the patient during their surgical procedure. Patient safety and excellent patient care are my top priorities as a nurse.

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How communities can honor

LOCAL NURSES

The stress associated with the nursing profession has been well documented. A 2022 study published in the journal BMC Nursing found that job stress not only has an adverse effect on nurses' health, but also may reduce performance and quality of care, potentially affecting the outcome of patients.

There's no denying nurses have a lot of weight on their shoulders. That reality underscores the importance of letting nurses know how much they're appreciated. Community leaders can consider these ideas as they look for ways to honor local nurses.

- Recognize nurses at public events. Parades, high school sporting events, holiday tree lighting ceremonies, and

other community-centric events draw large crowds. That makes these events the perfect time to honor local nurses and emphasize all the work they do to help their neighbors. Ask a local nurse or two to serve as grand marshal(s) in a holiday parade and/or let local nurses flip the switch at a tree lighting ceremony. Community dignitaries like a mayor or local police chief can explain who the honoree is once the crowd gathers.

- Support a nursing charity. A community-wide campaign to support a charity that benefits nurses or causes important to nurses can be a great way to thank them for all they do. Various domestic and international organizations are linked to the nursing profession. Prior to introducing a campaign,

community leaders can speak with local nurses to see if there is any specific charity or cause important to them. Some charities may provide job training in communities where nursing shortages have made it hard for locals to access quality health care, while others may finance health care operations, including staffing of nurses, in underprivileged countries.

- Publicize and support efforts to improve on-the-job safety for nurses. The American Nurses Association noted that nurses were forced to reuse masks or purchase their own safety equipment during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Communities that want to express their appreciation for nurses can support efforts

to ensure working conditions are safe for nurses and that nurses don't need to reach into their own pockets in an effort to avoid illness.

- Embrace public health efforts. One of the most effective ways to honor local nurses is to take a little off their professional plate. Community leaders can urge residents to get their annual flu shots and update other vaccinations in an effort to keep hospital admissions low, which in turn makes nurses' jobs easier.

Nurses are worthy of praise. Communities can do much to show these invaluable health care professionals how much their efforts and sacrifices are appreciated.

Community leaders can consider these ideas as they look for ways to honor local nurses.

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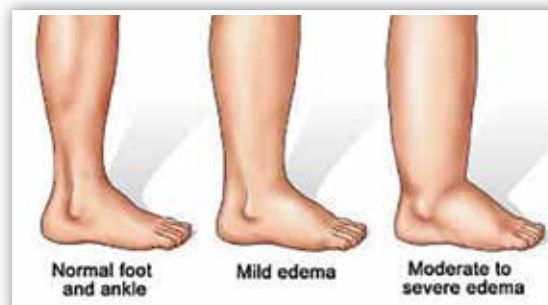
Are you one of the 21 million people in the United States that suffer from lower leg swelling?

As we age, our bodies change. We tend to accept slowing down, more aches and pains and many other changes to our body as part of the normal aging process. Some changes are expected; yet other changes are not part of the normal aging process. One specific occurrence is swelling in the lower legs. A small amount of swelling in the lower legs in the elderly population may be considered normal. However, significant swelling in the lower legs is not typical. Consistent swelling in the lower legs can also be a sign of a more complicated disorder and range from feet and ankle swelling at the end of the day, to taking your socks off and having the fabric imprint remain for an extended period, to pitting edema (if pressing on your skin with a finger causes an indentation, you have pitting edema) or constant swelling of your lower legs.

Edema/swelling is when you have an abnormal excess accumulation of fluid in connective tissue. Chronic edema or swelling of the lower legs can cause pain, heaviness, weakness, discomfort, and limitations in mobility and flexibility.

Lower leg swelling has multiple possible causes. Venous disease is the number one cause of lower leg swelling.

Swelling associated with venous disease affects many individuals, including those with a family history of vein disease or varicose veins, obesity, multiple pregnancies, older



age, history of leg injury or surgery, sedentary lifestyles, history of deep venous thrombosis (blood clot in the vein), and occupations that require long hours of standing. At The Vein Company, our experienced medical staff have years of experience in treating and diagnosing all stages of venous disease including all associated disorders.

Swelling is typically your body's way of telling you something else is occurring. Any of the following conditions may be a possible cause of lower leg swelling:

- venous disease
- heart, liver or kidney failure
- radiation
- infection
- Trauma
- or certain medications.

What is the treatment?

First, any underlying causes need to be identified and treated. By not treating the underlying cause, you are only addressing the symptoms and the swelling will not only return but it will continue to get worse.

Next, any remaining swelling needs to be addressed and treated. It is important to address and treat swelling quickly to avoid permanent tissue damage. Compression therapy is the gold standard for the treatment of swelling. Each person is unique and should be treated with an individualized treatment plan. Many times, that treatment plan may include several steps to resolve the swelling. The treatment options may include one, some or all of the following treatment modalities.

- Manual lymph drainage, which is a gentle limb massage that pushes the fluid to the competent (working) lymphatic zones.

- Exercise programs and short-stretch compression bandaging, ensuring low pressures in the leg while resting and high pressures as soon as the calf muscle contraction begins.
- Finally, because this may be a longterm issue, pneumatic intermittent compression may be added to your treatment for an extended period of time. Pneumatic intermittent compression is a device that uses an air pump to inflate and deflate an airtight garment placed around the legs, which mimics the rhythmic calf muscle contractions and promotes improved venous flow and lymphatic drainage allowing the fluid to move out of the tissues and back into the blood



circulation. These devices are customized for each individual leg size and are used at home as prescribed by your provider. The use of a pneumatic intermittent compression device can maintain the healthy flow of fluids out of the tissues and into the vascular circulation in the comfort and convenience of your own home.

- All treatment options are covered by Medicare and most insurance payers.

In addition, adherence to a good skin care and hydration plan should be implemented to prevent infections and frequent movement/walking throughout the day to avoid pressure sores.

At The Vein Company, our specialized team of providers are committed to the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of venous disease and its many associated conditions, including swelling. Our company provides specialized treatments tailored to the unique needs of each patient. The majority of our treatments are covered by Medicare and most major insurance payers. With 6 locations throughout Tennessee and Virginia, we are here to serve our patients with compassion and care. ♦



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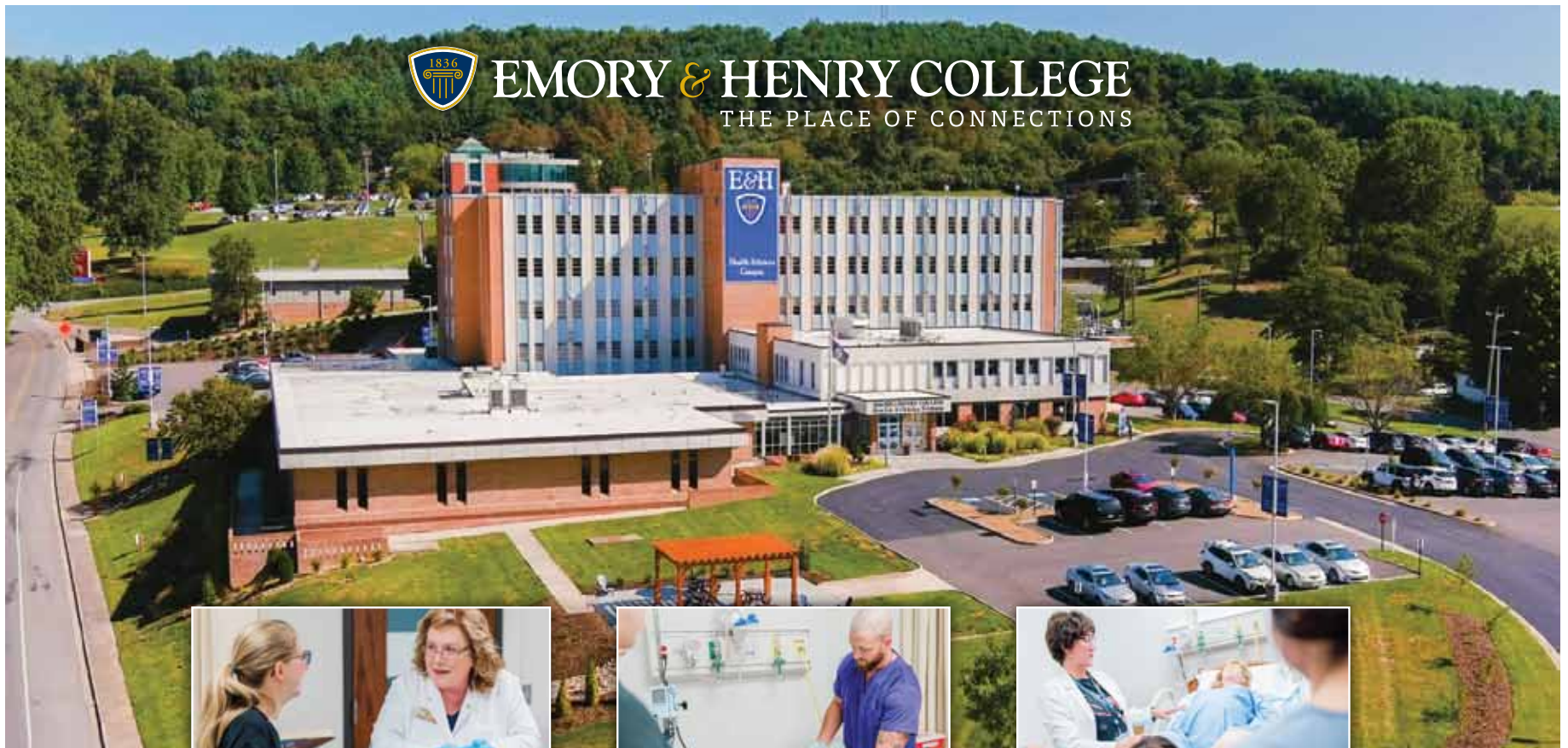
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How to manage the stress of being a NURSE

Working in the health-care sector can be a fast-paced job filled with days characterized by extremes. Nurses already were working long, variable shifts in hectic environments before COVID-19 came along. Then they were asked to do even more, including being tasked with the care of a seemingly endless stream of new patients.

According to a research paper published in *The Lancet* in June 2020, a large-scale, cross-sectional study of 2,014 frontline nurses from two hospitals in Wuhan, China, determined the nurses had a moderate level of burnout and a high level of fear while working. Roughly half of the nurses reported emotional exhaustion. Beyond China, many nurses routinely report having moderate to high levels of stress on the job.

The nursing education and program resource *Nurse Journal* says stress may be one of the most overlooked issues affecting nurses and nursing

students today. Stress can affect nurses' personal and professional lives. In fact, scientists first identified stress as an occupational concern for nurses in the 1950s. Continuing to explore ways for nurses to alleviate stress means more positive outcomes for all involved. Here are some strategies.

INCREASE STAFF

Worker shortages can take their toll on nurses who have to work even harder due to those deficits. Whenever possible, healthcare offices and departments should make every effort to keep sufficient qualified staff on hand so that nurses do not feel overly taxed. Nurses can do their best to advocate for hiring more nurses as well.

TAKE QUIET BREAKS

Nursing requires a high level of skill and technical acumen. Most nurses cannot daydream or work on autopilot while on the job. Taking ample opportunity to retreat to quiet spaces and turn off your brain for some time

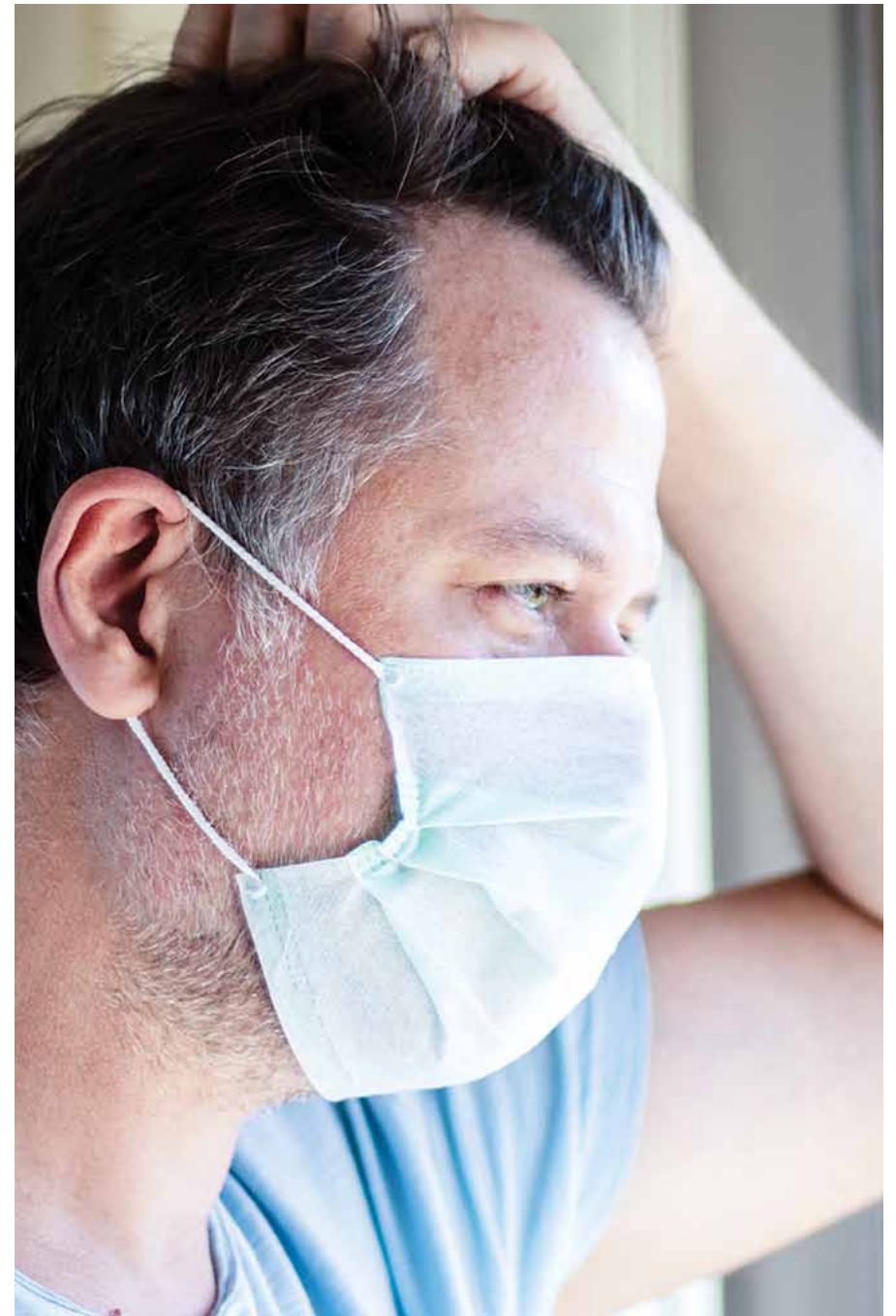
can help you recharge during a shift. While resting, drink water and limit caffeine consumption. Mild dehydration may increase cortisol levels and exacerbate stress.

TRY AROMATHERAPY

Researchers have long studied how certain aromas can calm anxiety. According to the healthcare site *Healthier Talk*, in one study researchers gave special citrus-scented badges to stressed out nurses working in a cancer center. Over shifts ranging from four to eight hours, the nurses' stress levels decreased by up to 40 percent. Using scented oils or other aromatherapy techniques may help induce a calmer atmosphere.

FIND A SHIFT YOU CAN MANAGE

Rather than working a varied schedule each week, determine if you can work a consistent schedule. Nurses tend to work 12-hour shifts and even longer hours when shortages require overtime. However, by working the same shift hours,



your body can grow accustomed to the schedule, rather than facing exhaustion from ever-changing shifts. In addition, a routine can reduce anxiety, helping nurses more easily anticipate what is coming next.

KEEP A JOURNAL

Keep a list of days when you're feeling especially overwhelmed and jot down what led to that feeling. Identifying particular stressors can help you find effective coping strategies. You may notice you're more stressed

on days you are responsible for a school carpool. Asking a friend to help out in these situations can alleviate stress.

Nursing stress is a common problem that can be addressed in a variety of ways.

Continuing to explore ways for nurses to alleviate stress means more positive outcomes for all involved. Here are some strategies.



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