

2020 Professionalism Conference Recap

Nametags.

Vendors.

Patient baths.

Trauma care.

Vaccines.

The 2020 Professionalism Conference was held at the Brigham Young University Wilkinson Center on Monday, February 24. Nursing students from every semester gathered to connect with each other, learn from a variety of nursing professionals, and enjoy some tasty J-Dawgs.

In the morning presentation, keynote speaker Dr. Kathleen Vollman gave a presentation about the research surrounding patient baths and oral hygiene.

“This is the power of nursing,” Vollman said, referring to how cleaning patients’ mouths helps reduce pneumonia cases. “Something simple, scientific, that can make a huge difference in patient outcomes.”

After the presentation, students met with various recruiters and company reps, including Intermountain Health Care, Utah State Hospital, and UNA.

After the break, students attended various breakout sessions.

In a session entitled “ABCs, Not Just the Alphabet: Prioritizing Trauma Care,” trauma director Geri Jean Lundquist shared a story about her first fatality, a 19-year-old girl that had died in a car accident.

“We can’t save everybody,” said Lundquist. “But if we can learn about priorities, we can do the best we can.”

Lundquist listed various scenarios with participants, having them practice finding trauma priorities through the question “What’s going to kill them first?”

In his session “Strategies to Counter Vaccine Hesitancy,” Dr. Bill Cosgrove discussed the benefits of the HPV vaccine and various strategies to encourage parents to allow their children to be vaccinated. His main advice? Approaching the parents with the mindset of giving their child a gift will allow for greater results than going in for a fight.

“Essentially if I focus on ‘this is a wonderful gift I can give to their child,’ it works,” he says.

In another session, legal nurse consultant Linda Swenson gave students advice as to how to avoid medical malpractice. One of these tips was making sure that patients have the correct medication. In a chilling example, she told a story about a woman in an assisted care facility who had received a prescription for methotrexate, a powerful chemotherapy drug, by mistake. No one

caught the error, and the woman ended up dying. Swenson encouraged students to trust themselves and question random prescriptions that don't fit the patient's medical history.

BYU alumni Lauren Young gave students tips for their first year as a resident nurse. She talked about how she had wanted to work in the ICU after graduation but got a job in the progressive care unit.

"I didn't get my dream job . . . But it actually ended up being the best possible job for me and I loved every second of it," she said.

Young encouraged students to be happy wherever they end up as an RN, to be humble and teachable, and to get involved.

Vollman also gave a presentation about how to recognize and manage sepsis.

In the closing session, speaker Jamie Schanbaum—a GKS spokesperson, US para-athlete and survivor of meningitis—spoke about "Life After Meningitis."

After contracting meningitis at age twenty, Schanbaum had to have her legs amputated below the knee and her fingers amputated. She eventually became a U.S. Paralympic cyclist, even winning a gold medal in 2011. She is an active advocate of the meningitis vaccine.

Many students remarked how inspired they were by her story. "It makes nursing feel real," said one student. Another said how good it was to hear from the patient's perspective, and another was "encouraged to fight for change."

Students were able to walk away from the conference with a vision of life after nursing school: lives as advocates, leaders, and healers.