

Careers in Healthcare

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"For many rural medical and public health students, finding their 'reason to care' was a huge deciding factor in pursuing small-town practice."

National Rural Health Association

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"If you're passionate about both science and patient care, the M.D.-Ph.D. path offers a unique opportunity to make a real difference."

Miranda Lim, M.D., Ph.D., Associate Professor of Neurology, Oregon Health & Science University

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DR. JOEL BERVELL

Social media's favorite doctor dives into the importance of health equity

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Shaping Future Healthcare Leaders: The Journey of Mielad Ziaee

Healthcare is constantly evolving, and the future of the industry depends on the next generation of skilled professionals who are prepared to lead with knowledge, innovation, and compassion. Organizations like HOSA-Future Health Professionals play a critical role in shaping these future healthcare leaders by providing students with the resources, experiences, and mentorship needed to thrive in various medical and health-related careers.

One such success story is Mielad Ziaee, a Marshall Scholar, Truman Scholar, public health advocate, and innovator. Ziaee's parents immigrated from Iran to the United States to manifest a new life. Their resilience and perspective deeply influenced his understanding of community, determination, and health from an early age. Before hitting the labs of prestigious institutions, Ziaee joined HOSA as a high school freshman.

Climbing the ranks

Ziaee's leadership journey quickly unfolded — from member to area officer, to Texas state officer, and eventually, to serving on HOSA's International Executive Council. His tenure coincided with the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Finding creative ways to engage members across middle school, high school, and college in virtual settings connected the dots between leadership and innovation.

"Being part of the 'COVID generation' was both challenging and inspiring," Ziaee shared. "It taught me how to build community and how that community can enact change."

Ziaee's experiences ignited a passion

for research, where he found the intersection of policy, public health, technology, and community engagement. In particular, food insecurity has become a focal point of his academic work.



It taught me how to build community and how that community can enact change.

"I'm a proud Houstonian. I go to the University of Houston, so one of the biggest challenges that my community faces is food insecurity," Ziaee said. "I work with our Data Science Institute to try to understand both technological and community-based cultural approaches to food insecurity."

Gaining global experience

Ziaee will continue his study of public health as a Marshall Scholar at the University of Edinburgh this fall. He



Mielad Ziaee

beamed with excitement as he described studying at an institution that nurtured scientific legends such as Charles Darwin and Alexander Graham Bell and exploring Scotland's unique healthcare system.

"Edinburgh, specifically, is where they did the Dolly the Sheep experiment, which is super cool," Ziaee said. "It's very interesting as an American to see how they're doing things [in Scotland], and to hopefully bring that back and promote policy innovation here in public health."

For students aspiring to make a difference in healthcare, organizations like HOSA offer an unparalleled opportunity to gain real-world experience, develop leadership skills, and join a network of like-minded individuals committed to improving health outcomes worldwide. Learn more at hosa.org/alumni.

Written by **Noni Kigera, Communications Specialist, HOSA-Future Health Professionals**



INTERVIEW WITH
Mielad Ziaee
Alumni and
Former
International
Executive
Council Member,
HOSA-Future
Health
Professionals

The Key to a Career in Nursing?

A Flexible, Focused Program

Stamina, determination, a desire to give back to those facing illness — although Taylor Neuhalfen and Chidozirim Stanudeze — a recent alumna and current nursing student, respectively, from the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus in Aurora — have different backgrounds, these are three words you could apply to their stories.

Neuhaflen and Stanudeze have participated in CU Nursing's Traditional Path for nursing students, which accepts those who have finished their first two years of college education elsewhere — such as at another four-year university or community college. The path usually takes two years to finish, after pre-requisites are completed.

This degree path offers the best of both college experiences. A student can start their journey at a community college or traditional university where they'll dive into core classes while enjoying campus life. Then transition to this specialized healthcare campus to focus on becoming a nurse. It's the perfect blend of both worlds.

Although it lacks the conventional fixtures of "campus life" like dorms, students at the Anschutz Medical Campus gain hands-on healthcare experience through expert classroom instruction, clinical rotations at top-ranked hospitals, and training with high-tech patient simulators.

Consistently ranked as the top nursing program in Colorado and top 20 in the nation, CU Nursing boasts a 94.88% pass rate on the nursing licensing exam (NCLEX).

Here's a closer look at Neuhalfen and Stanudeze's journeys:

A calling to care for children

Neuhalfen, a long-distance runner, began nursing school in Minnesota, and when she returned to her native Colorado



Chidozirim Stanudeze and Taylor Neuhalfen
Photos courtesy of University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus

to continue her B.S. in Nursing at CU Nursing, she began simultaneously coaching her high school's cross-country team.

That experience compelled her to set a goal to care for young patients.

"I feel called to work with that population because I love working with their families and being a small light in such a dark situation," she said. During school, Neuhalfen worked as a clinical assistant in the pediatric intensive care unit and now works for Children's Hospital Colorado in the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit.

"It's difficult because they're sick kids," she added. "While I can't change the outcome of what's happening to the child, I can provide them with the best care possible in the moment. Seeing the smiles of patients and family members when kids progress out of the intensive care unit to the floor makes the difficult times worth it."

A propensity for "sustained adrenaline"

Like Neuhalfen, Stanudeze has

stamina. To be in the military, as Stanudeze is, that's essential.

"I haven't slept since I turned 17," said Stanudeze, who by the age of 20 has graduated from high school (where she took concurrent college courses), enlisted in the U.S. Army, completed basic training, and is now working toward becoming an officer via ROTC. She's now in her final semester of the B.S. in nursing program.

She's the oldest of four, and when she was 7 years old, her father emigrated from Nigeria through the Diversity Immigrant Visa Program. Growing up, Stanudeze cared for her siblings as well as for her grandfather when he battled cancer. She always knew she wanted to work in medicine or science.

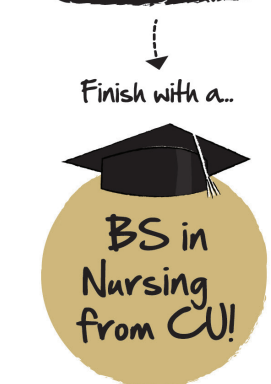
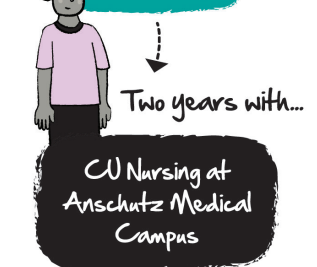
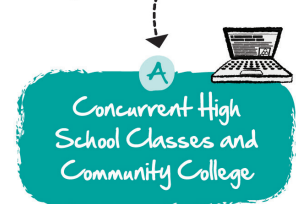
She learned about CU's program while taking concurrent classes at the Community College of Aurora.

"I learned to advocate for myself," she said. "If I wanted it, I was going to make it happen."

Written by **Melinda Carter**

Pathways High School Students Can Take for a Nursing Career

Two years at A, B, or C



Scan here to learn more about CU Anschutz's College of Nursing, and to take a quiz to see which of their programs is right for you:



Creating a Culture of **Support** for Nurses

Appreciate a nurse and your gratitude could go beyond making their day — it could alleviate burnout and lead to better healthcare outcomes for patients.

Nurses are the backbone of healthcare. Yet staffing shortages, evolving clinician roles, and other challenges faced during and after the COVID-19 pandemic have strained their ability to provide life-saving patient care. On top of a very demanding profession, nurses are human beings, with the same personal and family obligations we all have. These competing demands create a recipe for burnout.

As a nursing professional development (NPD) practitioner, a specialty of nursing practice sometimes known as a nurse educator, I am proud to be one of those cheerleaders. My role is to guide nurses through clinical training with knowledge, skill, and encouragement. I contribute to a nurse's ethical practice development by building confidence through engagement and feedback. I've seen firsthand how appreciation, mentoring, and respect can help nurses beat burnout.

It's my job to contribute to a happy and healthy healthcare environment for nurses, but anyone can join a nurse's support system. Doing so can even enhance patient outcomes for yourself and your loved ones.

Now more than ever, nurses face challenges that threaten their well-being and ability to provide quality care. By offering these invaluable professionals meaningful support, we can cheer them on and become their backbone, fostering a better work environment that reduces burnout and improves health outcomes for all.



WRITTEN BY
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Community Connections Are Key to **Addressing Rural Workforce Challenges**

In rural DeKalb County, Tenn., the need for healthcare is great. The predominantly agricultural area has a population of about 20,000 spread out over 329 square miles of rolling hills and winding rivers, with one ambulance serving the entire area.

DeKalb County has only five doctors, and several are nearing retirement. The local hospital is not allowed to provide live births. For Ashli Chew, these stark disparities only motivated her to pursue a career in rural medicine.

"I feel a calling to work in my hometown," she said. "I feel like they are my people, so it's important to me to give back to that area. I've seen the significant need and lack of resources."

A medical student at East Tennessee State University's Quillen College of Medicine, Chew grew up in rural Tennessee and has always known she wanted to return home to practice. An emergency room rotation at her hometown hospital made the decision even more personal. The understaffed facility contracts with out-of-town physicians to cover emergency room shifts, and one night Chew was paired with a distracted doctor who was dismissive of the three patients who came in. For Chew, however, they weren't just patients — one was a member of her graduating class, one attended her church, and one was a former student of her grandmother.

"I knew all of them," she recalled, "but he was very cavalier and flippant with them. One thing he said was, 'This seems like a

big deal to them, but I've seen a lot, and they really don't need to come to the ER for this.' It was striking to me because I know these people and I love these people, and maybe it's not an emergency to him, but it is to them. It was really hard for me to take. I decided it isn't his job to care about these people — it's mine."

Reason to care

For Chew and many other rural medical and public health students, finding their "reason to care" was a huge deciding factor in pursuing small-town practice — and they believe rural living has a lot to offer the younger generation. Stakeholders also suggest medical students from various backgrounds need more exposure to rural healthcare. Chew feels many people have misconceptions about rural practice that can be dispelled by firsthand experience and finding reasons to become invested in the community.

By offering advocacy, communications, and networking opportunities for students, educators, job seekers, and employers, the National Rural Health Association (NRHA) is committed to building and supporting a robust rural and public health workforce now and in the future.

Written by **National Rural Health Association (NRHA)**

Indiana University School of Public Health-Bloomington **Delivers Real-World Wellness Outcomes**

The Indiana University School of Public Health-Bloomington (SPH-B) pursues a singular mission: “To promote health among individuals and communities through integrated multidisciplinary approaches to research and creative activities, teaching, and community engagement.”

How is this mission accomplished in a school with faculty from diverse disciplines? At SPH-B, health-promotion specialists teach and conduct research in collaboration with attorneys and underwater archaeologists. Together, SPH-B faculty and students explore a variety of topics including cancer recovery, soil contamination, the opioid crisis and every other issue that influences health and environmental outcomes.

A decorated roster of experts

With more than 200 academic appointees across five departments, SPH-B offers an unmatched wealth of knowledge to shape both healthcare and the pursuit of overall wellness. Faculty are thought leaders and innovators in aging, mental health, obesity, water safety, family systems, addiction, injury prevention and rehabilitation, sexual health, and more.

Health from every angle

Five SPH-B departments approach wellness through distinct lenses.

The **Department of Applied Health Science** includes multiple facilities dedicated to applied behavior research, industrial hygiene, and nutrition science — while centers and institutes investigate health disparities, sexual health promotion, addictive behavior, and behavioral wellness. Graduates of this department serve as health educators, policy advocates, safety directors, nutritionists, and more.

The **Department of Environmental and Occupational Health** seeks to identify, understand, and prevent environmentally related diseases. Graduates of this department ensure the safety of

working conditions, water, food, and air quality. Some work to promote sustainable societies and the benefits of green space. Shawn Miya is one of them.

“SPH-B gave me the opportunity to combine life-long passions for the environment and people’s health to create a fulfilling career pathway,” Miya said. “My M.P.H. allows me to understand the intersection between social and behavioral determinants of health, and how climate change can exacerbate health disparities by disproportionately impacting vulnerable populations. I can gather a team of experts and volunteers to collect data and gain support for adaptation strategies across all sectors of our community.”

The **Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics** studies the distribution and patterns of health events. It offers the Big Ten’s only accredited undergraduate degree in epidemiology. Alumni develop the intellectual and practical foundation for careers in academia, industry, and government. Kellee Harper-Hanigan, D.P.T., Ph.D. earned her doctorate in epidemiology and is a program director and associate professor of physical therapy at Lincoln Memorial University.

“SPH-B allowed me to use my knowledge as a physical therapy clinician and educator,” Harper-Hanigan said, “and apply what I was learning in epidemiology to biomechanics through an interdisciplinary approach. Epidemiology and biostatistics are applicable to so many different areas; studying it truly trained me to think about problems and solutions in new ways.”

The **Department of Health & Wellness Design** focuses on purposeful design of medical, social, recreational,

and therapeutic infrastructure to help people live healthier, happier lives. Graduates of this department serve in a variety of careers, including business, healthcare management, recreation therapy, government public health services, nonprofit organizations, universities, and research centers.

The **Department of Kinesiology**: From undergraduate programs in exercise science and sport marketing and management to a doctoral degree in human behavior (and everything in between), this department is one of the most comprehensive of its kind. It hosts nine laboratories for investigating physical activity in both healthy and special populations. Graduates of this department are healthcare professionals, athletic administrators, exercise physiologists, and human performance professionals.

Healthier people everywhere

From Indiana to Africa to Instagram, SPH-B offers person-centered approaches, hands-on learning, and expert guidance for improved health outcomes. Alumni work in cities, villages, and homes worldwide to shape the health of people, families, and communities everywhere. And students find the passionate colleagues and mentors who guide them to life and career success.



SCHOOL OF
PUBLIC HEALTH
Bloomington



INTERVIEW WITH
Shawn Miya
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INTERVIEW WITH
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To learn more about the Indiana University SPH-B, visit **publichealth.indiana.edu**



Photo courtesy of Indiana University School of Public Health-Bloomington

Public Health: The Backbone of a Healthy Community

Public health is a crucial part of our everyday lives, yet it's experiencing a shrinking workforce, underfunding, and eroded public trust. This must change for everyone's safety.

Many associate public health with vaccines and monitoring for diseases, but it is much broader than this. Public health ensures the safety of our communities through emergency preparedness and response; works to prevent premature death from intentional and unintentional causes; promotes on-the-job health and safety; and makes sure our water is safe to drink, our food is safe to eat, and our air is safe to breathe.

Although public health touches almost every aspect of our communities, it has seen decades of underfunding. Additionally, the workforce is shrinking [at a time when a skilled and diverse public health workforce is needed more than ever.

For individuals who are beginning to think about their careers, consider public health. For those working in public health who want to learn more, organizations like the American Public Health Association provide numerous educational opportunities. For those individuals who want to ensure they live, work, and play in healthy communities, be a supporter of public health and advocate to your municipal, state, and/or federal representatives.



WRITTEN BY

**Melissa (Moose) Alperin,
Ed.D., M.P.H., MCHES**

Chair, American Public Health Association Executive Board;
Associate Professor of Practice,
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Emory University)



Dr. Joel Bervell | Photo courtesy of American Medical Association

Dr. Joel Bervell on Social Media's Role in Improving Health Equity

Dr. Joel Bervell (AKA The Medical Mythbuster) discusses the power of the individual and the unexpected impact of social media on health equity and accessibility.

Your advocacy for healthcare equity and education has made a significant impact. Was there a defining moment in your journey that pushed you to take on this role?

When I was growing up, my grandma was my main caretaker. My parents were both working and going to school, trying to provide a better life for my siblings and me. When I was in sixth grade, my grandma ended up going back to Ghana because we were old enough to take care of ourselves. Within a year, she passed away. The reason why was that she had contracted malaria and gone to the hospital.

I remember hearing later that there were delays in her care by the hospital staff because she was expected to bring her own materials to the hospital. That was the first time I remember realizing that healthcare disparities existed, and I wanted to mitigate these disparities, help highlight them, and show people in my community how these exist in the first place. As time went on, I began to realize that these disparities don't just exist in a global context; they exist right here within the United States.

In college, I learned that one's ZIP code is a better indicator of their health than their genetic code. Where you live is such

a strong indicator of your health, and in some cities, the differences in life expectancy can be drastic.

What's something you wish more students knew about the realities of a career in medicine that they might not see on social media?

I think if you were to look at TV shows or the social media posts of doctors, you'd assume that every single doctor is the smartest person out there. The myth I'd like to dispel is that medicine is not just about intelligence or hard work. Those are important, but it's also about resilience. For anyone going into this field, there are moments of doubt, burnout, and frustration — especially when navigating systemic issues. The most important thing for someone wanting to go into the field of medicine is figuring out your "why."

What is it that drives you in the darkest days or the hardest times? Those are what will make you remember why you do this in the first place. For me, my "why" has always been my grandma. Whenever I see a patient or I've been working 24 hours straight, I always think back to my "why," and that keeps me going.

Improving Healthcare With a Leading Public Health Education

Growing up, Autumn Tangney's perspective on modern healthcare — both its benefits and limitations — was shaped by her family.

Tangney, a Master of Science in Public Health student in Johns Hopkins University's Department of International Health's Health

Systems program, was raised by a single mother and her grandmother in Fairhaven, Massachusetts.

"I'm very motivated by not coming from much and wanting so much more," she said.

During Tangney's youth, her mother put herself through nursing school and often expressed frustrations with overcrowding and administrative inefficiencies in the healthcare system. Her father's experiences with health services were frustrating; he was chronically ill and struggled with mental health and substance abuse.

"He always feared the health system," Tangney recalled. "He wasn't educated about it and saw it as inaccessible and unaffordable."

At Providence College, Tangney majored in political science and immersed herself in extra-curricular and volunteer opportunities. At the school, she started an Education Collaboration Committee, doing advocacy work with LGBTQ+ coalitions and a safety and security task force.

In her sophomore year, when Tangney was interning virtually with the Ministry of Health in Kenya, she learned that her father had passed away from COVID-19 and compounding health effects from tuberculosis and cirrhosis of the liver.

"I thought a lot about how his socioeconomic status impacted him, his poverty and his lack of education, and his fear around healthcare, mental health, and physical health," she said. "It hindered him from the life that he could have had — the life that he deserved."

His passing motivated Tangney to pursue a career that directly promoted health equity at the patient level. She picked up a second major

in health policy and management, and entered John's Hopkins' Bloomberg School after graduating in 2023.

Making a difference through public health

The Bloomberg School, with its global reputation and distinction as the No. 1 school of public health in the country, appealed to her. She was particularly impressed by its extensive alumni network more than 28,000 strong and the professional connections this presents.

"Everyone around me was so motivated," Tangney said. "I just felt instantly inspired when I stepped on campus."

Tangney moved to Laurel, Maryland, to attend the Bloomberg School, and it wasn't long before she was working in the Baltimore community. She was an outreach assistant with the HEAL Refugee Health & Asylum Collaborative through the Department of Pediatrics in the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, and was a research assistant on a harm reduction and HIV risk factor study in connection with the Bloomberg School's Department of Health, Behavior and Society.

In the process, she fell in love with the Baltimore area — from the food to the diversity, to the opportunities.

Now in the second year of her M.S.P.H. program, with an expected graduation in May 2025, Tangney is also pursuing certificates in leadership for public health, healthcare, and humanitarian health.

"I've definitely had a lot of opportunities to be involved in the community, and have taken all that Hopkins has to offer professionally and really thrived," she said.

Striving for better global health

Last summer, Tangney was awarded a Global Health Established Field Placement grant



Autumn Tangney | Photo courtesy of Bloomberg School of Public Health

through the Gupta Klinsky India Institute at Hopkins, which allowed her to travel to India to work with a program that served adolescents living with perinatally acquired HIV.

While in India, she worked with the RISHI Foundation to develop training modules for support groups in four areas: health, education, gender, and well-being.

Tangney continues to work with the School's International Vaccine Access Center at the RISHI Foundation based in Bangalore, India.

Tangney has moved to the greater Boston area and remains committed to promoting health equity after graduating.

"Bloomberg is a place where whatever you put in, you can take out," Tangney said. "And I feel like I have taken so much."

Written by **Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health**



To learn more, visit
[publichealth.jhu.edu/
get-a-masters](https://publichealth.jhu.edu/get-a-masters)



Shaping the Future of Healthcare Through Nursing Leadership

Communities thrive when healthcare is accessible, equitable, and tailored to the unique needs of their populations. Rooted in this reality and guided by its mission of optimal health equity for all, the Betty Irene Moore School of Nursing at UC Davis prepares the next generation of healthcare leaders and nursing scientists to meet these challenges.

Rural communities face distinct obstacles, from limited access to specialized care to shortages of healthcare professionals and resources. Recently, a School of Nursing researcher engaged with communities across California to develop a new toolkit with cross-sector strategy to improve infrastructure, resources, and services for an aging population in rural areas. Our students and faculty engage with resources like this to understand real-world applications of community health strategies, empowering them to create healthier, more resilient environments for all.

Addressing health equity gaps doesn't just require resources like this — it demands a workforce trained to understand and meet the diverse needs of patients. UC Davis has prepared physician assistants and nurse practitioners to fill the primary care gap in rural and underserved areas for nearly 55 years. Our curriculum ensures that graduates are equipped to advocate for systemic change and deliver compassionate, culturally competent care.

If you are passionate about making a difference in healthcare and want to be part of a transformative educational experience, consider joining the Betty Irene Moore School of Nursing at UC Davis. Together, we can advance a future where every community — regardless of geography — has access to quality healthcare and the opportunity to thrive.

Written by **Rebecca Badeaux, Director of Strategic Communications, Betty Irene Moore School of Nursing at UC Davis**



Learn more and apply today at nursing.ucdavis.edu

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BETTY IRENE MOORE
SCHOOL OF NURSING

Compassion in the Country: The Beauty of Rural Nursing

Providing nursing care in rural areas has unique benefits and challenges, but autonomy and role satisfaction can lead to a profoundly rewarding career.



WRITTEN BY
**Lori Hendrickx, RN, Ed.D.,
CCRN, CNL**
Professor of Nursing,
Northern State University;
President, Rural Nursing
Organization

Rural nursing comes with unique benefits and challenges that distinguish it from nursing in urban or suburban areas. The rural setting fosters a deep sense of community and purpose, but it also presents logistical and professional hurdles that require adaptability and resilience.

One of the primary benefits of rural nursing is the opportunity to build strong, meaningful relationships with patients. In smaller communities, nurses often care for individuals and families over extended periods, allowing them to develop trust and provide more personalized care. This continuity fosters a sense of connection and satisfaction for many rural nurses.

Rural nurses also enjoy a broad scope of practice. Due to limited access to specialists, they often practice broadly in a generalist role, from emergency care to women's health to chronic disease management. This diversity enhances their skill set and can lead to professional growth and a greater sense of autonomy. Another benefit is the lifestyle that rural areas can offer. The slower pace of life, lower cost of living, and close-knit community atmosphere are attractive to many individuals seeking a more balanced work-life dynamic.

Facing unique challenges

Despite these advantages, rural nursing is not without its challenges. One significant issue is the lack of resources. Rural healthcare facilities often face budget constraints, leading to shortages of staff, equipment, and supplies, making delivery of care more difficult. Geographic isolation is another challenge. Nurses may have to travel long distances, which can limit access to professional development opportunities and peer support, although

the use of online delivery and telehealth technology has increased opportunities for continuing education for rural nurses and access to specialist care for rural dwellers.

Rural nurses frequently experience high workloads and stress due to staffing shortages, leading to fatigue and burnout. Additionally, recruiting and retaining healthcare professionals in rural areas can be difficult, resulting in chronic understaffing. A key recruiting technique has been a "grow your own" philosophy, where rural facilities support nursing students from the local area financially, who then agree to return to the rural area to work. Finally, working in a close-knit community can blur personal and professional boundaries. Rural nurses often find themselves treating friends, neighbors, or acquaintances, which can complicate confidentiality and objectivity.

Serving a critical role

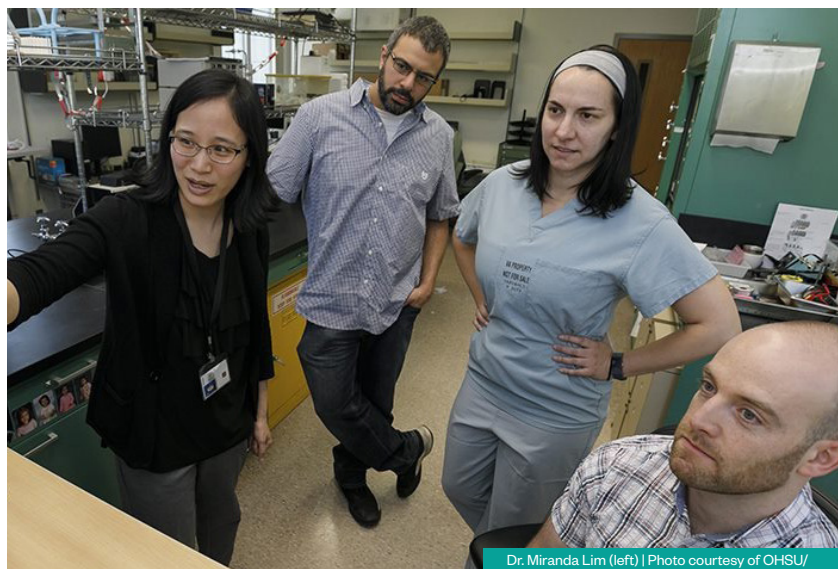
Rural nursing is vital to ensuring equitable healthcare access in underserved areas. Rural nurses often serve as the backbone of their communities, providing comprehensive care where medical resources are limited. Their close ties to the community foster trust, enabling personalized and culturally sensitive care. By overcoming challenges such as geographic isolation and limited infrastructure, rural nurses play a critical role in improving health outcomes and reducing disparities, making a profound difference in the lives of their patients.

Rural nursing offers the rewards of connection, variety, and meaningful impact, but demands resilience to overcome challenges like resource scarcity and geographic isolation. For those embracing rural healthcare, it can be an incredibly fulfilling career.

Bridging Science and Patient Care:

Insights from a Physician-Scientist

Recently recognized by former U.S. President Joe Biden as a recipient of the Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers, Dr. Miranda Lim, a physician-scientist at Oregon Health & Science University, discusses the challenges of running a research lab while delivering uncompromising patient care.



Dr. Miranda Lim (left) | Photo courtesy of OHSU/
Kristyna Wentz-Graff

What initially inspired you to pursue a career as a physician-scientist?

I was hooked by a psychobiology class at the University of Southern California that explored how the brain controls behavior. It was transformative. I became fascinated by the intersection of science and human behavior — complex things like language, social behavior, and relationships. For me, a career as a physician-scientist felt like the perfect way to dive into these areas, combining hard science and the humanities under one umbrella.

Where did you do your physician-scientist training, and how did that shape your journey?

I trained in a combined M.D.-Ph.D. program at Emory University in Atlanta from 1998 to 2006. I went into it with a strong desire to research non-human primates, so I applied only to programs affiliated with National Primate Centers. However, when I arrived at Emory, I discovered prairie voles. Their social bonds and behaviors became the focus of my Ph.D. research, and my love for them hasn't faded since. I still have a prairie vole colony in my lab!

After my 8-year M.D.-Ph.D. training, I completed my neurology residency training at Washington University in St. Louis. The institution was incredibly supportive, giving me dedicated research time, which was pivotal to my discovery linking sleep with amyloid pathogenesis in Alzheimer's disease.

That discovery was one of the key turning points in my career.

Was there a moment in your career when you faced an unexpected challenge?

Absolutely. I've had personal and health challenges that tested my resilience. One particularly difficult time was when my partner and I divorced at the end of residency. I moved to Philadelphia for a fellowship at the University of Pennsylvania, and it was a very raw time for me emotionally. But Penn was incredibly supportive during that transition. I also went on to meet my now-husband there, so that chapter ended up bringing wonderful new beginnings.

More recently, I was diagnosed with breast cancer and underwent a double mastectomy. It's been a difficult experience, but it has also helped me connect with patients in a new way. I've come to appreciate even more what it's like to be on the other side of the doctor-patient relationship. That perspective has reaffirmed my love for this work and inspired me to simplify and prioritize what brings me joy.

I'm inspired by your approach to work-life balance, especially given such profound challenges.

For students like myself who are pursuing a career as a physician-scientist, what would you say is the most rewarding part of this career?

There are so many rewarding aspects, but I think the most fulfilling moments come from seeing your research directly benefit patients. In addition, working in this field offers incredible variety — no two days are alike. You're constantly evolving as a scientist and a clinician, and that keeps things exciting. Then there's the joy of collaborating with talented people who bring new ideas and energy to the table. Those moments of synergy, when everything aligns, are magical.

What would you recommend to students pursuing the physician-scientist path?

If you're passionate about both science and patient care, the M.D.-Ph.D. path offers a unique opportunity to make a real difference. However, it's not for everyone — it requires a lot of time and commitment. You need to be driven by curiosity and the desire to solve real-world problems. Stay focused on your long-term goals, even if the path sometimes seems uncertain. Importantly, find mentors who can guide you along the way — those relationships can be invaluable.



INTERVIEW BY
Elias Wisdom,
Vice President,
American Physician
Scientists Association;
M.D.-Ph.D. Student,
Oregon Health &
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Dr. Danielle Jones

Discovering Purpose: **Dr. Danielle Jones on Embracing a Career as an OB/GYN**

Better known as Mama Doctor Jones online, Dr. Danielle Jones shares how she realized her calling as an OB/GYN and what advice she has for others to create a fulfilling career in healthcare.

What inspired you to pursue a career in medicine, specifically in obstetrics and gynecology?

I didn't actually choose this field, it truly chose me. I tried so hard in my third year to love something else, and I just could not let go of how much I enjoyed my OB/GYN rotation. In hindsight, I see what I refused to see then — I absolutely loved reproductive physiology, was enamored with the reproductive system portion of our human anatomy class, and actually enjoyed embryology while almost everyone in our class hated it. It became apparent during my OB/GYN rotation that this field really fit me well.

I also have ADHD, and I watched as the doctors would go from a routine clinic visit to preventing cervical cancer with an in-office LEEP procedure to getting called to run to the

hospital and deliver a baby, with the next day being a full day doing surgery in the operating room. I could be specialized and focused but have a broad daily agenda that never allowed me to get bored.

What advice would you give to students or young professionals considering a career in healthcare?

I tell our medical students to choose the field they find utterly fascinating, something they can be passionate about in a never-ending fashion for the next 40+ years. I think it comes through clearly in my online footprint and YouTube videos that I am utterly fascinated by this field and truly excited at the opportunity to learn and teach anything about pregnancy, periods, and beyond. Being genuinely fascinated by your career

allows you to easily continue learning for the rest of your life and to be an effective teacher, both of which are necessities in medicine.

How do you think digital platforms can be used to inspire the next generation of healthcare professionals?

I've always thought the most important part of doing social media as a physician, at least for me, was what I've taken away in regards to learning about the patient experience. I've talked endlessly about how social media allowed me to find my voice, but it first taught me how to listen to theirs. I have spent countless hours reading and listening to firsthand accounts of how healthcare professionals affected patients, in both negative and positive ways, during some of their hardest days.

What is the most rewarding part of your career?

This might sound odd, but caring for patients experiencing catastrophic loss or recurrent pregnancy loss is truly where I find myself feeling the most fulfilled. While this is often the place we have the least amount of medicine or answers to actually make a difference, being allowed to walk alongside a patient through tragedy, grief, and hopefully the process of eventually finding peace is such an incredible honor to me.

I think this goes back to my deep hope that we learn how to avoid making our patients' worst days worse, because I've seen some truly horrific care bestowed upon people experiencing utterly heartstopping loss, and every time someone allows me into their grief space to care for them in the way I can, I feel genuinely honored to be there.



How Nurses Can Change the Future of Healthcare

The International Council of Nurses (ICN) has launched a Charter for Change to call for protection, respect, and investment in our nurses for a sustainable future for nursing and healthcare.

ICN's new Charter for Change presents 10 policy actions that governments and employers must take to create and sustain healthcare systems that are safe, affordable, accessible, and responsive, and shift nurses from being invisible to invaluable.

1. Protect and invest in the nursing profession to rebuild health systems that can deliver the sustainable development goals and universal health coverage to improve global health. Recognize and value health and healthcare as investments, not costs.

2. Urgently address and improve support for nurses' health and well-being by ensuring safe and healthy working conditions and respecting their rights. Ensure protections against violence and hazards in the workplace, and implement and enforce international labor standards on the rights of nurses to work in safe, healthy, and supportive environments.

3. Advance strategies to recruit and retain nurses to address workforce shortages. Improve compensation for nurses to ensure

fair pay and benefits, and uphold positive practice environments that listen to nurses and provide them with the resources they need to do their jobs safely, effectively, and efficiently.

4. Develop, implement, and finance national nursing workforce plans with the objective of self-sufficiency in the supply of future nurses. Align resources to support a robust workforce to deliver essential health services, reverse unemployment, and retain talent. When international migration takes place, ensure it is ethical, transparent, monitored, and delivers equal mutual benefits for sending and receiving countries, as well as respecting the rights of individual nurses.

5. Invest in high-quality, accredited nursing education programs to prepare more new nurses and advance career development for existing nurses. Design curricula so nurses graduate with the right skills, competencies, and confidence to respond to the changing and evolving health needs of communities.

6. Enable nurses to work to their full scope of nursing practice

by strengthening and modernizing regulation, and investing in advanced nursing practice and nurse-led models of care. Reorientate and integrate health systems to public health, primary care health promotion and prevention, community, home-based, and patient-centered care.

7. Recognize and value nurses' skills, knowledge, attributes, and expertise. Respect and promote nurses' roles as health professionals, scientists, researchers, educators, and leaders. Involve nurses in decision-making affecting healthcare at all levels.

8. Actively and meaningfully engage national nursing associations as critical professional partners in all aspects of health and social care policy, delivery, and leadership as the experienced and trusted voice of nursing.

9. Protect vulnerable populations, and uphold and respect human rights, gender equity, and social justice. Place and uphold nursing ethics at the center of health systems' design and delivery so all people can access healthcare that is equitable, non-discriminatory,

people-centered, and rights-based.

10. Appoint nurse leaders to executive positions in all healthcare organizations and government policy-making. Strengthen nursing leadership throughout health systems, and create and sustain nursing leadership roles where they are most needed.

Nurses will no longer tolerate being expected to work tirelessly in poor environments where workloads threaten their physical and mental well-being and their voices are ignored. We have seen the devastating results of poor investment in and respect for nurses, and we know that lack of action is leading to more nurses leaving the profession, or migrating to countries where there are better conditions and salaries. What is left now is for governments and employers to find the will to act on this knowledge and understand that spending on the healthcare workforce is an investment that will bring huge returns.

Written by **Dr. Pamela Cipriano, President, International Council of Nurses**



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