

THE Importance of Caring

AUGUST 2019

my journey into nursing



Adrian Tasa, RN, BSN, OCN

ONCOLOGY NURSE NAVIGATOR

Adrian Tasa, RN, BSN, OCN, oncology nurse navigator at Columbus Community Hospital (CCH), knew nursing was the job for her since she was a kid.

“I grew up looking up to my aunt, Kim, who was a nurse at the hospital in Albion,” Tasa said. **“I would constantly hear about what an amazing person she was in the community, so I decided when I was about 10 years old that is what I would do too.”**

Her mind made up, Tasa started volunteering at a local nursing home at a young age and as soon as she was legally old enough to get a job, Tasa begged her parents to let her take a course that would allow her to become a certified nursing assistant (CNA). Tasa would continue to work as a CNA throughout high school and nursing school.

While in nursing school, Tasa was chosen for the Summer of Excellence Program on the oncology/medical floor at Sanford Medical Center in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. She also received news of her grandmother’s diagnosis of pancreatic cancer at this same time. When Tasa’s grandmother passed away, oncology nursing care became something deeply personal to Tasa.

When Tasa graduated, she took a job on the medical/surgical floor at CHI St. Francis Medical Center in Grand Island and after two years, she took a job at the St. Francis Cancer Treatment Center. Here, Tasa was able to work with her patients in the clinic and the chemotherapy setting, which called for a close relationship with each of the oncologists. During this time, she also completed

her oncology nurse certification and filled in for one of the nurse navigators who was on medical leave.

“I was rotated around to almost every job for a nurse possible there, and I am incredibly blessed to have learned so much from some amazing oncologists and staff members there,” Tasa said.

Tasa’s experience at St. Francis confirmed her love of oncology and she considered becoming a nurse practitioner in an oncology setting before she moved into her position as the oncology nurse navigator at CCH in August 2018.

“I was actually in the middle of applying at the University of Nebraska Medical Center when the opportunity came up here, so I feel like that was fate stepping in,” Tasa said.

CCH had just created a patient navigation program and created the positions of oncology nurse navigator and oncology social worker. Tasa was hired as CCH’s first oncology nurse navigator and Shelby Czarnick, CMSW, LIM-HP, was hired as CCH’s first oncology social worker in fall 2018. These positions were created to help better educate and prepare patients for cancer treatment.

Patient navigation programs and positions like these have been shown to improve patient’s timely access to medical treatment, as well as patients’ comfort level with, and understanding, of the health care system.

In her position as oncology nurse navigator, Tasa is responsible for facilitating communication between patients and their health care providers, preventing delays in

treatment, explaining medical treatment and language, and connecting patients to needed medical resources.

“I try to maintain contact with each of my patients throughout their journey, as an extra resource,” Tasa said.

Tasa also keeps in touch with oncology patients after their treatment by teaching *A Time to Heal*, a 12-topic program designed to help patients move forward after cancer therapy. She also assists the Columbus Cancer Foundation and Czarnick with monthly support groups.

Working with Czarnick, CCH’s oncologists and surgeons, and the rest of the staff and leadership at CCH, is one of the things Tasa enjoys most about her position as oncology nurse navigator.

“I really am incredibly blessed to be in such a wonderful facility that has really stood behind me with this position,” she said. **“The executive staff were so encouraging when I first started, which was a good thing, as starting up a new oncology navigation program was pretty daunting at first.”**

Though Tasa acknowledged that some days in health care are hard, she said it’s always worth it and she’s happy with her decision to become a nurse.

“I know this field is not always easy, but I couldn’t imagine doing anything else,” she said.

For more information on Tasa and CCH’s comprehensive cancer care services, visit www.columbushosp.org.