

# Transcript

**00:00:09 - 00:00:24 Julie Wan**

Hello listeners and welcome back to the Nursing Station podcast where we highlight nurses coming together to share information about daily professional practice and initiatives to improve patient outcomes across the NYU Langone health system.

**00:00:24 - 00:01:00 Julie Wan**

Earlier this month, from November 1st to the 7th, Medical Surgical nurses were celebrated around the globe during med-surge nurses' week. Nearly 55% of nurses across the nation currently work in General Medical and surgical hospitals, caring for patients across various subspecialties such as cardiac and telemetry, oncology, nephrology, orthopedics and vascular surgery. Today we will be talking to nurses who are currently working in Med-surg or have a background in Med-surg where they will be sharing the passion for the specialty of Med-surge nursing.

**00:01:00 - 00:01:20 Julie Wan**

Before we jump in, we want to remind our listeners this session is eligible for contact hours and in disclosure: in compliance with ANC's Commission on accreditation, this educational activity does not include any content that relates to the products and/or services of a commercial interest that would create a conflict of interest.

**00:01:21 - 00:01:29 Julie Wan**

So, let's get started with some introductions. My name is Julie Wan and I'm the nurse manager for nursing quality in Brooklyn. And I'm joined by my co-host, Gabby.

**00:01:29 - 00:01:36 Gabby Bolanos**

Hi everyone. My name is Gabby Bolanos. I am a nursing professional development specialist here at the orthopedic hospital.

**00:01:36 - 00:01:44 Liz Capobianco**

My name is Liz Capobianco, and I'm the nursing professional development specialist for the acute medicine service here at Tisch/Kimmel.

**00:01:44 - 00:01:54 Erin Hazel**

My name is Erin Hazel. I work on a Med surg Tele unit at NYU Langone, Long Island. I've been there for seven years now.

**00:01:54 - 00:01:59 Rae Ferro**

Hi, I'm Rae Ferro. I'm a med-surg float here at NYU Langone in Brooklyn.

**00:01:59 - 00:02:08 Yani Rodriguez**

Hi, I'm Yani Rodriguez. I work on the 11th Floor Medicine Unit at NYU Langone Orthopedic Hospital.

**00:02:08 - 00:02:21 Gabby Bolanos**

Thank you so much for joining us. Our first question, we're going to toss it over to you, Liz, can you tell us about the specialty of Med-surg nursing and what does it really encompass?

**00:02:21 - 00:03:06 Liz Capobianco**

Well, the key word, Gabby is specialty. Medical surgical nursing is actually the largest specialty in our country. The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates 1.7 million nurses that work in Med-surg, making it the most common work setting for nurses. The specialty encompasses an acute level of care with a wide variety of diagnosis, both medical and surgical. [For] the nurses, it's really important for them to have critical assessment skills and they really execute a treatment plan, including patient education, coordinating care with other disciplines, providing emotional support and planning for a safe discharge for the patient.

**00:03:06 - 00:03:29 Erin Hazel**

Liz, I agree. I think that Med-surg is the most common in the nursing workforce because that encompasses just kind of the foundation that nursing is built upon, no shift in Med-surg is alike and it truly touches upon I think every diagnosis, comorbidity and walk of life.

**00:03:29 - 00:03:43 Gabby Bolanos**

Thank you. Next question is and I'll throw it over to you, Rae. What drew you specifically to Med-surg nursing versus a different type of specialty like critical care or women and children?

**00:03:43 - 00:04:00 Rae Ferro**

So I came into med-surg because I wanted to take care of people and that is my biggest drive because I really enjoy taking care of people and I felt like med-surg would provide me with a lot of experience that I could grow off of.

**00:04:00 - 00:05:04 Erin Hazel**

I think in nursing school they really kind of teach you and instill upon you that you need a foundation and you kind of just learn the basics in Med-surg and you can go wherever you need to from there. So I think that's where I started. I applied to a lot of places and Med-surg was one of the first positions I got offered and I truly fell in love with telemetry. I love the heart. I loved everything about it. But the beautiful thing about it is that you really see so many other things in telemetry. Somebody could come in for something like this chest pain, but they could be a hemodialysis patients. So like it really brings everything in together. I truly find joy in helping the older population. I always thought that I might branch off into critical care or going through [my] labor and delivery rotation. I was like, look, this is for me like I love it so I think you go through different phases and med-surg is just one of those things where you love it and you can move on, or not.

**00:05:04 - 00:05:30 Gabby Bolanos**

Yeah. And I think, you know, that's kind of like the beauty of the specialty that it's so dynamic. I think that's the reason why probably keeps a lot of people in med-surg - that every day is a new patient to work with, a new case to kind of unfold. And so it definitely keeps you on your toes. And I'm sure Liz, in your work, you have to do this a lot of just like maintaining so many different. Competencies and skills caring for so many different types of patients.

**00:05:30 - 00:05:39 Erin Hazel**

Even if it is the same patients like working 2 shifts, 3 shifts in a row. Even if you have the same assignment like those two days/three days can be completely different.

**00:05:40 - 00:06:05 Liz Capobianco**

In the ICU, the patients are going through a real, real crisis. Our patients, yeah, they're going through a crisis, but it's a little smaller scale and unlike, you know, on labor and delivery, where someone's bringing a new life into the world, that's a big deal. But for those patients, this hospitalization on Med-surg to them is a big deal. And for you being there for them at that point, you're just a huge part of their lives.

**00:06:05 - 00:06:15 Gabby Bolanos**

And my next question and I'll post this to you. Yani, what do you like most about being a Med-surg nurse? And you know what really keeps you in working in Med-surg?

**00:06:15 - 00:07:49 Yani Rodriguez**

Well, what I like most about med-surg nursing is the sense of fulfillment. We're like the front line of patient care and being able to advocate for our patients, monitor their progress and aid in their recovery, I think is very rewarding. And like Rae said, you get to enhance your skills in med-surg. Like a lot of the stuff that you actually learn in school, you actually get to do hands on in med-surg. Just like Liz said, is not something where you're just focusing on one specific specialty or one specific body part - like you see the whole patient as a whole and you treat like the whole person, not just one specific condition. That's what drew me to med-surg nursing. I also like that every shift is different. You get to work with a bunch of different type of people, the groups are diverse and what keeps me there is like the balance I feel between hands-on care at the bedside, using my critical thinking skills and being able to work with the interdisciplinary team, which is like huge support. I think that that's one of the things that keeps me there and the impact that we have on patients and their family like really So, you know, sometimes you do like the smallest thing that you will just comes like second nature like, you know, holding somebody's hand when they're going through something or listening to their worries, administering a medication to take away the pain that they're feeling at the moment. All those things make a huge difference in patients' lives. I just think that the whole working at med-surg just rewarding - all around - even for my personal growth and it just gives you more opportunities if you want to branch out and do something else.

**00:07:49 - 00:08:44 Erin Hazel**

Yeah, I agree with all of that. And I really think that nursing in general is always changing. So yes, you can stay in med-surg as your specialty for your whole career in nursing. But nursing is just always changing and like so is medicine. So the treatment modalities and everything, you gain confidence and then you kind of build upon that and then you gain more confidence, and it shows and it's, you know, like you're walking into that room and your patients can tell when you're there to help them. And it's just giving them the therapeutic communication and like, seeing them as a whole. I think that's what keeps me there is, like you said, they're there. And to them it's a big deal and you can make a difference in their life and you feed off of that. When you gain that confidence and you kind of feel that like connection, for me, it's just what fills my cup.

**00:08:44 - 00:09:01 Gabby Bolanos**

I definitely agree with you. And just because I don't think a lot of our nurses across the system know that LOH, the orthopedic hospital, has the med-surg unit. Can you [Yani] talk a little bit more about kind of like the specialized aspects of the 11th floor and how we collaborate with the main campus [Tisch]?

**00:09:01 - 00:09:50 Yani Rodriguez**

So our unit LOH is a medical transition unit. Our patients need like special coordination and planning for safe discharge. Our patient population is very diverse and they come from all walks of life. So we have patients that live by themselves and can go back home, and they don't understand what that's like. They have to be sent to like a subacute rehab center just to get themselves a little more mobile, a little more functional, a little more to what they were like before they came to the hospital. Other patients are undomiciled, they're homeless, and they don't have a place to go, and we have to plan safe discharge for them. My floor is very interesting to work on and I learned so much from my patience and I just got a profound appreciation for life in general and for the work that at LOH.

**00:09:50 - 00:10:12 Gabby Bolanos**

Although it's not a major unit, I think it's about 16 beds and correct me if I'm wrong, Yani. But in our collaboration with Tisch, you know we're allowing beds to be opened up at their Med-surg units so that we can kind of work with those patients that are having those prolonged discharge issues, and this is something that we've been doing since the COVID-19 pandemic.

**00:10:12 - 00:10:24 Julie Wan**

Yeah so we just wanted to ask all the nurses today, you know, what are some of the reasons you would encourage a nurse, whether it's a new nurse or, you know, a seasoned nurse to work on your med-surg unit?

**00:10:24 - 00:11:19 Julie Wan**

I can share a little bit from my perspective because I also have background in Med-surg nursing and I didn't think I was going to stay in Med-surg nursing for so long. I worked on a Med-surg unit for eight years and I thought I was just going to be there for two years and then go on to like critical care, But what I really love, like you all mentioned, is that you got to see something different every day, like it wasn't just medical patients. It's not just surgical patients. You saw a wide variety and I learned so much from it that I really did just fall in love with it. And I said forget critical care. I felt like, you know, I like the connection where you could talk to your patients and the families versus in critical care, sometimes the patients we have more sedated patients and they're not really able to communicate with you. You're talking more to the family, which is fine as well. But I just really found that like I like connecting with being able to connect with my patients. So that's kind of what kept me there in med-surg nursing.

**00:11:19 - 00:12:22 Yani Rodriguez**

Well, like I said before, the opportunity that you get on the med-surg floors for new nurses, the opportunity to experience different things different, you get to do trachs, you got to do pegs, ostomies and wound care. We do Hospice care at LOH, we do palliative care. We have to do postmortem care for patients that pass away, you know, so we got to deal with end of life and all that stuff. It may sound a little scary, like for the new nurses because it's like, Oh my gosh, there's so much to learn, but it's very rewarding. And for seasoned nurses and nurses have been on the field for a long time if they enjoy bedside, I feel like with nursing in general, you never know too much. There's always a lot to learn. You never know everything. There's new things coming out, new innovations like I wish everybody could become a nurse. But I just feel like it's it's just very rewarding all around. It could be draining and tiring on the body and we have to provide a lot of emotional and physical support. So sometimes it is it could be draining. I think the rewards outbeat the times that I feel like I'm tired or drained out.

**00:12:22 - 00:13:22 Rae Ferro**

I'd have to agree with her. It is very rewarding. At the same time, I've learned so much and I've only been here since last March of 2023 and I've learned so much like she said. I've done wound care. I've done trachs. I've done ostomies and it can be draining at times cause you're at work and you have to be strong for your patient. Be supportive. Hold their hand. Comfort them when they're crying. Help them when they're confused and you do go home. Sometimes at night, carrying it with you. And you, you. Need to go home and find like a quiet spot for a little while. But it is so rewarding being a nurse because of the way that you help people. And for us, like Yani said, it could seem like such a minute thing. But to your patient, it's so huge and you can literally just make their entire day. And I can't tell you how many times my patients were like "you're coming back tomorrow, right?" So that's rewarding. Even just hearing that from my patients.

**00:13:22 - 00:14:36 Liz Capobianco**

Yeah. And I've been a Med surgeon nurse for 23 years now, and I still learned something new every day. And I love that about medicine, because there's always a new disease. There's a new drug, there's a new treatment. So I really like that. It's constant evolving. And we also have such a profound impact on the patients real trajectory of their whole disease process. And something else that I really love about med-surg is that you really pay attention to the body as a whole. You know, I think the most annoying thing to say to a med-surg nurse is a focused assessment. I say there's no such thing because we literally are assessing the patient from the top of their head to the bottom of their toes and everything in between. You really get to know our patients and I remember that as a new grad on medicine at Tisch just how my

assessment skills like skyrocketed. You're so nervous in nursing school when you're listening for breath sounds and bell sounds, and then all of a sudden you're getting the best practice and really honing into these like perfection of assessment skills.

**00:14:36 - 00:15:14 Erin Hazel**

I think in the past few years there's been a big focus on nurse retention and nurse burnout. I attended a magnet conference two years ago in Philadelphia and I attended a lot of in-services on that. So I think that Med-surg now is a better place to work than it ever has. I know after COVID there was just a huge shift on how is the nurse like? How are they doing? And I think that's been a big positive for these new nurses coming in. There's more questions being asked on like how they are and like there's more of like a focus on all of that.

**00:15:14 - 00:15:48 Julie Wan**

Thank you all for sharing that you could really hear the passion coming through from each of you. For the love that you have for med-surg nursing. Next, we would just want to talk about a little bit more about the two different Med-surg certifications. I'm not sure everybody that's listening does know that there's two different types of Med-surg certifications and if anyone wants to talk about them a little bit, the differences maybe in the exam.

**00:15:48 - 00:16:20 Liz Capobianco**

The two different certifications are the ANCC medical surgical nursing certification and that's from the American Nurses Credentialing Center. And the other one is the CMSRN certified Med-surg RN and that comes from the Academy of Med-surg Nursing, which is the only professional organization for Med-surg. I have the ANCC, I've had it since 2003. I renewed every five years. So I've done it a bunch of times. So ANCC is all that I know, but from what I've been told, the exams are very similar in structure and in the different topics that they cover.

**00:16:20 - 00:17:48 Gabby Bolanos**

Yeah. And I would just like to jump in on that. So if you already have your med-surg certification through ANCC, you can actually apply to get the CMSRN by just doing an additional 90 contact hours. You don't have to take another exam, but you essentially get a second certification for a set fee. So I think that's also kind of again emphasizing the immense rigor and specialty that Med-surg nursing is that you can actually get 2 certifications in one. So you can even show kind of how great of a Med-surge nurse you are. And I think in other conversations that we've had, you know, Med-surg certification is similar to the

NCLEX because again it covers a lot of different specialties. And we know when we hear the NCLEX we have sort of have PTSD from that from nursing school. But it's a strength in a way because we've all gone through the NCLEX once and so when you are taking your Med-Surg certification exam, you know it shouldn't seem like anything too, too different from what you've seen in the NCLEX.

But I also think the sooner that you do it, you know, for the new grads listening, oftentimes you have to work for two years before you can take a certification exam. But usually, you'll still have that knowledge from nursing school from the different specialties. Maybe if you don't get to necessarily work on like a true Med-surg unit, you're still able to kind of hold on to those skills and knowledge.

**00:17:48 - 00:18:19 Erin Hazel**

I would definitely encourage everyone to get it once they have their two years on. I think there is this weight that comes to taking the exam. It's similar to the NCLEX and it might bring up some past, you know, like fears and PTSD. But those first two years after graduation and getting your first job - you learn so much like this. The learning never stops even after school and it's just go take it because it's very - I feel like once you have those two years, you can totally get it.

**00:18:19 – 00:19:40 Gabby Bolanos**

If you're interested, which we all should be interested in getting certified, don't be scared. You know, I know for myself, I took my exam while I was going back to doing my Master's degree, so I was taking like an advanced pharm, advanced patho and those courses even really helped me prep for the exam.

Well, it was really great to highlight the specialty of med-surg nursing. I hope all of you listening out there can truly grasp the passion that we have across the board for med-surg nursing.

It really is truly a dynamic specialty that requires immense critical thinking and resilience. Thank you to all of our speakers for sharing your stories and your passion, not only for what you do for your careers and professional development, but what you do for our patients across NYU LH system and I think that is kind of is a key message here is that you know we have such an impact in the patients' lives and their experience being a Med surge nurse. So thank you again all for your time and for our listeners out there. As a reminder, this session is eligible for .5 contact hours. A survey will be posted with the recording, so please access and complete the evaluation to attain your certificate for the contact hours.