

## CARDIOVASCULAR INTENSIVE CARE NURSING

This column features Michelle Penaflor, RN, BSN, who works in the CVICU of John C. Lincoln North Mountain Hospital in Phoenix, Arizona. Here is what Michelle wanted to share with our readers about her interesting nursing specialty.

Michelle Penaflor, RN, BSN



### FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THIS SPECIALTY, CONTACT:

Michelle.Penaflor@JCL.com  
www.JCL.com

ORGANIZATIONS:  
American Association of Critical-Care Nurses  
www.aacn.org

RESOURCES:  
Grand Canyon University  
my.gcu.edu

BOOKS:  
*Nurse*, by Peggy Anderson (1978)

### WORKING NURSE: What is your current role in nursing?

**MICHELLE PENAFLOR, RN, BSN:** I am a Staff RN in the cardiovascular intensive care unit (CVICU) at John C. Lincoln North Mountain Hospital in Phoenix, Arizona, which is a full-service community hospital in a big city. As a Level I Trauma Center hospital, in 2004, we proudly became the first hospital in the region to earn Magnet status from the American Nurses Association.

### How did you get into this specialty and did it require any special training?

I have worked in the CVICU for the past four years. Prior to that, I worked on the med/surg unit here at Lincoln for five years and was ready for a change and some professional growth. I took the opportunity to discuss this with my director, Maureen Misterek, RN, who was very supportive. She encouraged me to do a “walk in your shoes” in CVICU as part of my PRIDE project. I did and I loved it! John C. Lincoln gave me the opportunity to expand my nursing knowledge and offered a critical care course right at the hospital. After acquiring my ACLS and critical care training, as well as a thorough preceptorship, I was off and running as a heart nurse.

### How long have you worked for this hospital, and how did you choose to begin working there?

I was first introduced to John C. Lincoln when I was taking a continuing education class at Gateway Community College. My instructor was one of the unit directors at John C. Lincoln. I was impressed that someone who already had a full-time job was giving back to the nursing community by teaching. I thought, if that hospital and those directors valued education and lifelong learning, then that was the place for me. I have worked at John C. Lincoln Health Network since 1999.

### What does a typical day involve for you?

A typical day is always busy and I learn something new every day! We have a great clientele in CVICU and an outstanding team of nurses and staff. Generally, we see elderly adults with cardiac issues. Our goal this year is to achieve status as a designated Chest Pain Center of Excellence. We have an awesome cath lab and a new emergency department. A typical patient would be someone coming in through the ED with chest pain and an acute myocardial infarction. Off to the cath lab they go, where they may intervene and repair the problem right there. After that, they would come to me in CVICU.

I monitor and support the patients and their families through a critical time in their life. The open heart program is always

growing. Often times, our patients are on intra-aortic balloon pumps and several critical intravenous medications. It is my job to keep them stable, provide education and prepare them to return home. It is the ultimate team effort!


**What are your favorite aspects of the job?**

My favorite part of the job is seeing the patients get better and knowing I made a difference. Also, at John C. Lincoln there is plenty of opportunity for involvement, as well as professional and personal growth. Currently, with the support and encouragement from the hospital, I have been able to attend Grand Canyon University to work on a master's degree in nursing as a clinical nurse specialist. I hope to act as a change agent in a positive way, providing quality, evidence-based nursing care and to continue to mentor and precept new nurses.

**Any challenges or least favorite aspects?**

The challenges are constant. That can be good thing or my least favorite. Working with the public is always a challenge. Coming into the hospital is like going to another country and not knowing the language or the culture. In general, people are scared and do not know what to expect. By keeping the patients and their families informed and part of the care plan, it gives them back some sense of control.

**What advice would you give to a nurse looking to enter your field of nursing?**

Nursing is hard work. It is challenging emotionally, physically and mentally, but it is one of the most rewarding, versatile and respected jobs you could have in a lifetime. Follow your heart and you can't go wrong. Heart nurses have big hearts and give great care. At JCL, "We always care for you!" 

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*My Specialty is a column devoted to examining a wide range of nursing specialties. Each specialty is explored through the eyes of an RN in the field. Should you know of a specialty that would be of interest to our readers, please send an email to [MySpecialty@WorkingNurse.com](mailto:MySpecialty@WorkingNurse.com).*

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