A Day in the Lives of Tuong-Vi Ho and Dawn P. Murphy, Nurse Practitioners

Tuong-Vi Ho’s Path to Her Current Position

Tuong-Vi Ho (Vi), RN, MSN, FNP, is an NP in the Department of Internal Medicine at the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston. Vi is from Vietnam. As a young woman, she worked at an orphanage in Saigon run by Seventh Day Adventists while the country was under siege. The church offered her the opportunity to be evacuated, and she was airlifted out of Vietnam three days before Saigon fell to the Communists. Vi was 21 years old when she arrived in Loma Linda, CA, with one change of clothes, her birth certificate, and very little money.

She settled in Texas because the climate was so similar to that of Vietnam. Vi then began her lifelong pursuit of education, obtaining licensed vocational nursing certification and getting an associate’s degree in nursing. At the University of Texas Health Sciences Center in Houston, Vi received her bachelor’s degree in nursing, followed by her master’s degree as a clinical nurse specialist in oncology. She subsequently completed postmaster’s certificates as a geriatric NP, adult NP, and family NP. Currently, Vi is a doctoral student at Texas Women’s University with a focus on prevention and early detection of breast and cervical cancer in Vietnamese American women.

Vi has worked at M.D. Anderson Cancer Center for more than 20 years. She is devoted to the institution, which earned her loyalty from the beginning when the director of nursing took care of Vi’s baby while she interviewed for a position.

Development of the Role

The role of an NP in the Department of Internal Medicine was unknown at the hospital until Vi worked with physicians in the emergency center to demonstrate to them how an NP could benefit the department. Ultimately, she succeeded in creating a position for herself, which was followed by the addition of other NP roles within the department, such as in the fatigue clinic and inpatient rotations.

A Typical Day

Vi makes rounds on hospital patients every morning when on the inpatient service. She also sees patients who come into the Neutropenic Fever Clinic in the emergency center to demonstrate to those patients while on an outpatient pathway. Vi also may cover the outpatient chemotherapy administration area for any adverse patient events or see patients in the anticoagulation or cancer-related fatigue clinics. Vi coordinates a “moonlighting pool” of advanced practice nurses (APNs) and physician’s assistants who provide support to the emergency centers after hours.

Vi is active in the care of Vietnamese women, who have a fivefold higher incidence of cervical cancer than Caucasian women. She has conducted breast and cervical cancer education workshops in Vietnamese American communities and presented a poster at the ONS 30th Annual Congress this year on the role of the NP in cervical cancer prevention.

Challenges and Rewards

Vi finds patient education to be the most rewarding aspect of her role, knowing she is making a difference in each patient’s life. She loves the variety in her position and never quite knows what to expect. Caring for her dying patients is her greatest challenge, and she finds that her spiritual beliefs, based on Eastern philosophy, help her greatly.

Dawn P. Murphy’s Path to Her Current Position

Dawn Murphy, RN, CRNP, OCN®, is a float NP in the oncology clinics at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania (HUP) in Philadelphia. Dawn has been an NP since 2003, when she graduated from Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia, PA, with her master’s degree in nursing with a specialty in oncology. She has many years of nursing experience in oncology, critical care, and home infusion.

Development of the Role

The role of the float NP is a new one at HUP. Many of the 16 APNs in hematology and oncology had difficulty scheduling vacation time or going to a conference without someone to cover for them in their absence. The float NP role was created to allow coverage and involved a great deal of trial and error. Because the APNs have highly specialized practices, the float NP has to be flexible enough to cover all specialties. Dawn had to determine what was...