

Nurse Excellence

Irina Beita, RN

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Meet Irina.

Can you tell us a little bit about yourself?

Growing up in the far east of Russia before the 90s meant that I was graduating my master's degree in arts and languages by the time we could finally leave the country for better opportunity. My parents have passed when I was 22 so there was nothing binding me to my country of birth. When offered three scholarships from Japan where they would cover all my living costs, research, education, and everything in between, I accepted. From 2003, for five years, I was a professor in Japan teaching languages, a career I truly loved. The economic downturn of 2008 reached Japan and caused me to lose my lucrative job, forcing me to reconsider my options. Taking a job from 9am-6pm in Japan, with a work ethic where you can't chuckle your tongue, swallow to hard or sit in a lax posture was far from tempting. Even more so, I realized that Japan is a tricky country where I will never be able to truly migrate. Even if I would be able to obtain citizenship after two years of working and five years of paying taxes, my future children will have no natural right to stay in this country permanently. My decision was made to come to America.

What were some challenges you faced when integrating to the American society?

To be up front, the word challenge would be a true understatement to the change of life that awaited me when coming here. Much as could have imagined it, I did not know its extent. Here I was, a successful professor studying languages as part of my identity, new to a place where my degree was worth a flat zero. It was financial crisis here too and there was no prospective job for a professor in foreign languages. It was devastating. Were it not for my twin sister living in Colorado who cheered me on and insisted that I cannot give up and live in America without a useful degree, I do not know where I would have been here today.

Within a year of when I came here, I gave birth to my second son, and I knew that coordinating motherhood and education is nothing to sneeze about. When I started looking into the options of classes, I found that nursing was the only one offering evening classes. The medical field was completely foreign to me. My father was a captain, my mom an engineer, my sister a journalist and I was a professor in foreign languages.

Still, I enrolled in the Associated Nursing Program with Bergen College, mostly because the time of the classes were feasible for me. The initial period was hard. Looking back, if only I would have known the success that will follow and how I'll end up falling in love my nursing career, it would have been easier to push through.

Can you identify something that helped you succeed despite the hardships involved?

After completing the first semester, I noticed many students fell out of the program. This urged me to continue because I felt like there is no way I could afford not to achieve my goal if I passed my first semester where others have failed. Once you are invested in something, it gives you the strength to keep on going.

Do you ever get to meet your twin sister?

We try to meet up every so often. Sometimes, I travel to Colorado, other times she comes here to New Jersey. This past summer, we vacationed together in Alberta, Canada where the weather is truly beautiful. It is hot in the day, but cool in the nights.

What would you consider your main goal as a nurse?

I make it my duty to voice my medical opinion or advice to the patient's family, although I know they may not always accept. There are many little things you may notice when caring for your patient hands-on that others may miss. When I started working with my patient, he was using an extra dose of energy to be all around the place. You had to chase after him and be on your toes. While I did not mind doing so, I noticed the child needs help with his behavioral issues. I took the time to broach the subject with the parents and explained the kind of help he would need. They were first hesitant whether to follow my directive but ended up acknowledging the importance of the suggested intervention. You cannot imagine the difference we saw in the child. It truly felt great to be a catalyst to the impeccable change.

Do you have a message you would like to impart to more White Glove nurses?

The main ingredient we need to focus on is care. Whether as people, parents, pet-owners, and of course nurses, it is all about nurturing our patients and truly devoting ourselves to them that truly makes the daily impact.

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