

## Shadowing Experiences

One of the most important decisions one makes is what profession to pursue. For those interested in healthcare professions this can be a complicated and overwhelming decision given there are so many. With this single decision one decides not only what their life work will be, how they will interact with others, and make an impact but it also reflects values, skills, knowledge, uncertainty and the ultimate impact on personal and family life.

When pursuing a healthcare profession it is recommended to shadow someone in the profession you are interested in. This is an opportunity to learn what the profession is about including the environment, the people you would work and issues that impact carrying out your chosen work. To experience and learn it is important to be aware of what the professional does all day. It is also important to know such things as:

- Day to day tasks
- Day to day schedules
- What happens when there is a schedule disrupted by a greater patient need or emergency
- What is it like to live with the uncertainty of disease and illness for both the professional and the patient
- How does the professional balance personal and professional life responsibilities and expectations
- What issues personal, professional or systemic impact the ability to perform

Perhaps some of the greatest things we can learn are those things that patients and their families have to teach us. Some things to consider might include:

- Information about the patient's illness and its impact on the patient, family and perhaps community
- What are some psycho-social, cultural and spiritual influences impacting the patient's well-being and recovery?
- What is the professional-patient interaction like?
- What are the important factors in listening and communication?
- What is the thought process or reasons the decisions that are made?
- What other issues impact patient's care?
- How did you react or respond to what you observed?

Whenever you shadow a professional it is important to keep track of your experiences. Be sure to record the name of the professional you are shadowing, their preferred contact information, the date you started and completed the experience, how many hours you shadowed. Also write down what you observed, what you learned about the profession, patients and yourself.