

LILY ASHUN, RN, BSN

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Providing compassionate care is the most important aspect of her profession for Lily Ashun, who has been a nurse for more than 23 years, seven of them with NYC Health + Hospitals/Belvis.

"I love nursing because it is a profession that doesn't work without compassion," she declared. "Yes, we do the science, but without the compassion it isn't complete. Nursing is more than just getting a paycheck - compassion moves me to go beyond what is required of me every day. It makes me stop and talk to patients. I respect them and they respect me, and that moves me. It adds to my integrity, makes me accountable, and causes me to do what I do with excellence."

Ashun says her mother's work as a nurse in her home country of Ghana for more than 50 years inspired her.

"I used to see her getting dressed all in white and walking to her job; she had such pride in what she did and I saw the way her patients looked at her. I wanted to be like her, and to do what she was doing so badly because she was giving something of herself and she did it so selflessly."

Selflessness plays a key role in her work, Ashun relates. "One of the things that makes me proud to be part of NYC Health + Hospitals is that we take care of patients despite their ability to pay," she notes.

"For those people who have to decide whether they should put food on the table or buy medicine, we make it easier for them not to have to make those heartbreaking and hard decisions. We open our arms to our community regardless of age, color, ability to pay, saying, 'Come in and we will take care of you the best way we know how.'"

"It is a privilege to work in this environment," she continues. "We don't worry about your immigration status or if you can speak English. We have the tools to help you. We help you live a better life. I am blessed more than are patients are. They give me more than we give them. I get the opportunity to give back and to help somebody else. It is blessing."

Patient education is a top priority. "We have to do what we can to improve things for our patients," she notes, "And teaching a patient how to care for themselves - someone worried about administering insulin or how to deal with their asthma - is

gratifying. The gratitude and appreciation patients show is amazing. That is what motivates me."

Ashun in turn has inspired others to join the profession. "One of the most memorable moments I had was when I met one of my former patients who became a nurse; when I saw her, I was in shock," she recollects. "And she said it was because of me - I was emotionally overwhelmed. I never believed I would make such a difference. She said although the journey was not easy, she kept at it and she made it. To this day I am speechless and beyond touched by her words."