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ACLP 2020 One-Person Program Scholarship recipient

Attending the 2020 Association of Child Life Professionals (ACLP) Virtual Conference was very eye-opening and insightful, broadening my knowledge on many aspects of the child life practice. First off, I learned that it was possible for a large number of professionals to connect virtually, and continue to learn, grow, and empower one another in the midst of a pandemic. Prior to this conference, I had never heard of a “virtual” conference and was worried that the annual conference would be canceled. I was overjoyed to learn that a virtual conference would still take place.

One of the biggest takeaways that I had from this conference came from the session entitled “Effective Well-Being of Vicarious Trauma.” In the midst of a global pandemic, we often find ourselves so focused on caring for others and tending to their emotions as well as trauma. How often do we slow down to assess our own level of well-being? I know that before watching this session it wasn’t something that I had slowed down to think about. Learning how to proactively manage vicarious trauma so that I am able to provide patients with my best effort will be instrumental in helping me to avoid burnout and continue to be a positive asset in my role as a child life specialist. Knowing the ABCs of vicarious trauma ensures that I am able to effectively assess myself, so that my self-care cup does not go empty. Therefore, I am able to continue to pour into others.

Another meaningful session that I attended was “What’s Your LGBTQ IQ?” I see a wide variety of patient’s at my hospital, and I have no doubt that the information that I learned from this session will be valuable in today’s modern society. I had never thought of using a greeting that included explaining what pronouns one prefers, and then asking the patient their preference. Honestly, I can see where this method would have been very useful with multiple patients that I have had in the past. This greeting will allow me to learn this important information quickly, as well as affirm whether the patient is comfortable

with me sharing the preferred pronouns with their care team. This will ensure a consistency of the pronouns used when conversing with the patient.

Finally, being a one-person program, there is always room for growth and will always be new coworkers that I will come across in the hospital setting. I feel that what I learned from the session, “There Is No I in TEAM: Involving other modalities when implementing a new child life based program within a unit” will be important as I strive to grow my program and work cohesively with other disciplines to best influence patients and their families. This session helped me to understand the importance of collaboration in the work-environment. In addition, it is impossible to be a positive impact on patients in a new department without first educating and gaining the trust of staff members. So often I am focused on following my patients to other departments and providing my services where needed, that I forget to slow down and think what other staff members may think of my addition to their interdisciplinary team.

I am confident that the knowledge I have gained from the 2020 ACLP Virtual Conference will be significant and stay with me as I continue in my career as a Certified Child Life Specialist (CCLS). I am grateful for this conference opportunity and look forward to staying active in ACLP events in the future.