
Zoom On: Megan E. Brunson



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#unstoppablenurse - American
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Megan E. Brunson is the 2019-2020 president of the American Association of Critical-Care Nurses (AACN) board of directors. AACN is the world's largest specialty nursing organisation, with more than 120,000 members and over 200 chapters in the United States.

Since 2007, Brunson has been the night shift supervisor in the cardiovascular ICU (CVICU) at Medical City Dallas Hospital in Texas. From 2000-2007, she was charge nurse/night shift in the CVICU at Emory Saint Joseph's Hospital in Atlanta, after completing two years as the night shift team leader in the telemetry unit at Texas Health Arlington Memorial Hospital. During more than 20 years as a night shift nurse, she has focused on securing professional development resources for nurses in a 24/7 care environment.

What are your key areas of interest and research?

As a night shift nurse, I have long been laser-focused on fatigue in healthcare, especially the promotion of rest for our patients and ourselves. There are so many factors tangled up with fatigue that it draws me in deeper every time I learn something new.

What are the major challenges in your field?

Staffing. It is the biggest challenge by far when you ask our community of nursing professionals. Appropriate staffing can improve nurse retention. The benefits are obvious, yet it's so complex that it will take a monumental shift to change. If you take a broader perspective, there are ample opportunities to improve the health of the work environment. A healthy work environment is cited again and again as essential to our patients, and the American Association of Critical-Care Nurses (AACN) has been studying the issue and developing strategies and resources related to healthy work environments for more than 15 years. The initiative is part of AACN's unwavering commitment to improve the environments where nurses work.

What is your top management tip?

A leadership tip that comes to mind is to inspire action in others by being curious and always being in a state of learning, no matter how much of an expert you might be.

What would you single out as a career highlight?

It would be easy to point to my role as the 2019-2020 AACN president. It truly is a gift. But my biggest career highlight remains the first patient I ever cared for as a registered nurse. It was the start of something bigger than I realised.

If you had not chosen this career path, what would you have become?

I really wanted to be the next Barbara Walters. I wanted to work in broadcast journalism and write about fascinating people who have done fascinating things. I have a love for science, and with a little nudge and some wisdom from my family, I realised I could have a career in nursing

that would allow me to meet fascinating people (patients and other healthcare professionals) and challenge my passion for science and critical thinking.

What are your personal interests outside of work?

I am a sports mom. I am the self-proclaimed biggest fan of my kids and their teams. I wear all the team swag, have the hoarse voice after a game from yelling and support the teams any way I can. Healthcare is a team sport, so in some sense, it is an easy transition.

What is your favorite quote?

It seems cliché to share a quote by Florence Nightingale, but I love so many of them: "Rather, 10 times, die in the surf, heralding the way to a new world, than stand idly on the shore." #UnstoppableNurse

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