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### MercyOne: Patient Advocate

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## Responsibilities

As a patient advocate, my role is to meet with the surgical patients, and their family if applicable, while making sure their needs are met. This can mean getting them beverages and snacks, grabbing a nurse for them, or just talking and playing games with them. You'll see new patients every shift if you volunteer weekly. The number of patients every day will also vary quite a bit. My role is to alleviate stress of other hospital workers and help to provide excellent patient care.

## Uniform



## Commitment

Since a lot of time is put into the process of becoming a volunteer, MercyOne asks you to commit to 0.5-2 years minimum of volunteering. As for weekly hours, there is no requirement. I volunteered two hours weekly, but you can choose anywhere from one to over ten hours weekly if you're looking to commit more time. You can easily transfer to different hospitals or switch between different volunteer roles.

## My Experience

My favorite part of my experience so far has been with elderly patients, especially those who are pleasantly confused and enjoy talking for awhile. I have noticed that most patients who desire longer, sit-down conversations are over age 70, while patients who desire more quiet and alone time are younger and otherwise healthy. I have found that the best way to first introduce myself to each patient is to state that I am a volunteer, since they feel more welcomed to ask something from me and converse longer. Another part of the experience that I have enjoyed is seeing the medical field from another perspective, while being surrounded by nurses, doctors, and other healthcare professionals.

## Mission

***"MercyOne will set the standard for a personalized and radically convenient system of health services"***

## Recent Changes

Things around the hospital have changed quite a bit recently with the spread of COVID-19. At first this meant more precautions like wearing protective eyewear, N95 masks, hospital-provided scrubs for everyone, taking temperatures of all staff when they arrive to the hospital, and restricting visitors. Now, they have recently temporarily suspended volunteers.

## Volunteer Services

***"This unique opportunity to help assist others in a hospital setting allows our volunteers to make a difference in the lives of those we serve."***

## MercyOne Hospital



## Becoming a Patient Advocate

Becoming a patient advocate is an easy but somewhat time-consuming process.

1. You must apply on MercyOne's website.
2. MercyOne will schedule an interview, background check, and health screening that you must have done before starting.
3. You will fill out more paperwork and receive your uniform and badge

## Who It May Interest

If you're considering becoming a nurse, PA, doctor, or anything else related to the medical field, volunteering in a hospital is a great way to gain healthcare experience. Healthcare experience is often required to get accepted into these programs. Volunteering as a patient advocate requires no prior experience or certifications and gets you direct patient contact, as opposed to other volunteer roles. Having a longer term volunteer experience like this looks better to admissions committees as well. You will become more comfortable interacting with patients after being a patient advocate for awhile.

## Psychology Implications

Given the connection between body and mind, it would make sense that nurturing one would positively affect the other. Researchers decided to study the effect that therapeutic interpersonal interactions had on different conditions in influencing the patient's emotional comfort. The results of a study showed that positive interactions with patients increased both the patient's emotional and physical comfort (Iurita, 2003). This can help decrease both inpatient and outpatient recovery time and increase compliance after discharge. This provides benefits to the hospital by increasing efficiency and patient satisfaction.

## References

- Iurita, Vera F. & Williams, Anne M. (2004). Therapeutic and non-therapeutic interpersonal interactions: the patient's perspective. *Issues in Clinical Nursing*, 13(7), 806-815. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2702.2004.01020.x>