

Meet Danielle

6:30 A.M.

I arrive a half-hour early for my shift. I enter through the main doors: answer the COVID-19 screening questions, have my temperature checked, sanitize my hands, put on a face mask, and head to the Specialized Behavioural Support Unit (SBSU) to care for 16 residents living with dementia. I sit down with the night shift nurse and receive resident updates, then I get right into the morning medication pass, or med pass as we call it.

9:15 A.M.

Personal Support Workers (PSWs) and I help residents get dressed and guide them to the dining room for breakfast. I take a moment to see one particular resident. He's not a morning person, so I open his curtain to let sunlight into his room. That helps him start his day in a better mood. We still take precautions for COVID-19, so Meal Helpers seat residents 2-per table, ensure hands are sanitized, then bring them their specific meals.

10:00 A.M.

After breakfast, my fellow nurses and I discuss going outside. The weather's nice and sunny! One resident loves being outside. Before he developed dementia, he used to putter for hours in his vegetable garden, drinking red wine. When he sits on the bench in the courtyard, those memories come rushing back for him, so I bring him a glass of grape juice, which he drinks happily and calls his vino. It puts a giant smile on his face and mine.

11:00 A.M.

Back from my break, I move on to prepping the lunch-time med pass when I'm approached by a resident asking if she can help me. I know her well. She's a sweet woman who thinks she's a staff member - not a resident. She tells me if the rest of staff have a mask she needs one too, so I get her a mask. She is very calm when she feels she is on the job and helping.

12:00 P.M.

We return to the dining room for lunch. Meal Helpers really are a huge help, allowing us to maintain enhanced safety procedures and deal with emergencies more readily should they happen.

12:30 P.M.

Our Recreation Therapist comes in to help with a scheduled family visit. One resident is visited by his grandson and is thrilled to see him. It's truly amazing to see their faces just light up.

1:15 P.M.

The last two hours of my shift, I go between updating documentation for our evening shift nurses to watching and managing resident behaviours.

2:45 P.M.

One resident begins pacing. He tells me it's been a long day at work and he needs to get home to his wife now. I use a redirection strategy and take him to the bus stop we have in our hall. It's common for residents to think Perley Rideau is their workplace, so the bus stop is a creative way we use to redirect their mind. He calms down and forgets about needing to get home - I make a mental note to document how effective this strategy was for him.

3:00 P.M.

My shift comes to a close. My sister, Alyssa, is a nurse on evening shift. Currently, we share a car. We do a key pass off in the hallway before I leave! I take a few minutes to sit, listen to the car radio and decompress. I'm glad for today and proud to call myself a nurse at Perley Rideau.

Meet Alyssa

3:00 P.M.

I've been in the unit for an hour already, so I've got a head start. I check in with the residents that are monitored 24 hours a day – each has a one-on-one PSW who keeps an eye on them, but I like to check in just to make sure everything's okay. It also lets me see if anyone is wandering.

5:30 P.M.

With med pass done, we go to the dining hall for supper. The PSWs on shift and I work together to feed the residents. All goes well!

7:00 P.M.

Back from break, the PSWs are beginning to get everyone changed for bed. I check in with one resident to see she's all smiles and very talkative. It's rare to see her in such a good mood, so I quickly get one of our donated iPads and set up a FaceTime call with her daughter. I know she'll be overjoyed to see her so happy and lucid. They say goodbye and she remains in a cheery mood until she falls asleep. WOW! We always take the little wins and celebrate them, this is what makes me love my work!

10:00 P.M.

A senior woman wakes up shouting into the hallway. I speak with her and it's very obvious she's confused and frightened. Our extra staff members give me the ability to sit with her for the next hour or so, calmly reassuring every question she has. Eventually she understands there's no cause for alarm and goes back to bed.

11:00 P.M.

I head out from my shift. Unlike Danielle, I like to head straight home and relax with a nice warm shower. I'm proud of today and think of the woman who spoke to her family with the iPad. Moments like that remind me as difficult as this job can be, it's all worth it to help these lovely individuals suffering from a heartbreaking disease.