

Melinda Rodriguez: Body and soul: Called to care for the whole person

July 27, 2020

Melinda Rodriguez is a member of Calvary Baptist Church in McAllen, where she serves on the safety and medical team. She has been in health care more than 40 years. From deep in the heart of one Texan, she shares her background and thoughts on being a follower of Christ in health care. To suggest a Texas Baptist leader in health care to be featured in this column, or to apply to be featured yourself, [click here](#).

Background

Where else have you served in health care, and what were your positions there?

I have been a registered nurse and, for the past 16 years, a family nurse practitioner and advanced practice registered nurse.

I started working as a staff RN in the ICU after graduation and later moved to working in the medical/surgical and day surgery units.

My goal and passion always had been to teach nurses. Later, I moved to the nursing education department and staff development, where I worked for four years. Then, I moved to the local junior college and began teaching licensed vocational nurses for two years prior to moving to the Rio Grande Valley.

Where did you grow up?

I was born and raised in Corpus Christi, where I lived until moving to the Rio Grande Valley in 1999.

How did you come to faith in Christ?

I accepted my Lord and Savior at a Girls in Action summer camp. Being raised in a Christian home prepared me, as well. I had the privilege of being baptized at age 10 by my grandfather Dr. Ignacio Gonzalez.

Where were you educated, and what degrees did you receive?

I graduated from W.B. Ray High School in Corpus Christi in 1973. I began my undergraduate education in 1974 at Texas Woman's University in Denton, where I earned a Bachelor of Science degree in nursing in 1978.

After moving to the RGV in 1999, I decided to continue my education at the University of Texas Pan-American (now UT Rio Grande Valley). I received a master's degree in nursing, family nurse practitioner track, in 2003.

I continued my education in 2008, applying at the University of Texas Health Science Center Houston School of Nursing and received a doctorate in nursing practice in 2011.

About life in health care

Why do you feel called into health care?

I chose to go into the health care profession after spending summers with my mother's sister. She was an RN in community clinics in medically underserved areas of Dallas. She worked diligently to help patients and families in need of health care.

My aunt had a true passion for helping her patients and their families. Through her living example, I chose to pursue education as a nurse.

I believe my Christian background and the passion to help others drew me to this rewarding profession. I see it as a true ministry, meeting the needs of the sick by using a holistic approach. The holistic approach allows me to meet their physical needs, while recognizing the spiritual aspect of their recovery is essential.

Caring for sick patients and their families gave me the opportunity to witness to them in a time of need and health recovery. I try to incorporate prayer with my patients and families when the opportunity arises. Patients are very appreciative, and I have seen how the role of prayer has helped them in their recovery.

How does being a Christian influence your decisions in health care?

I base my life on the golden rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" (Matthew 7:12).

I try to put myself in the patients' and families' shoes. My practice demonstrates honesty and lives by ethical principles. Honesty and transparency always are a must when caring for patients and assisting their families.

What one aspect of health care gives you the greatest joy?

Seeing patients get better and establishing a relationship of trust with them and their families. It is rewarding when patients tell you how they trust you "and will continue to come and seek health care with you."

What one aspect of health care would you like to change?

I would like to see health care providers take more time with patients and see them incorporate spiritual aspects of care with every patient they treat, incorporating prayers when possible.

What is the impact of health care on your family?

We recognize the importance of preventive care and staying healthy. We also recognize the importance of work-life balance. Recognizing our bodies are the temple of the Lord, we must maintain them well for his honor and glory.

Has there been a patient or family that has left an impact on your life as a health care provider?

I had the opportunity to work collaboratively with palliative care and hospice providers and nurses at a local hospital. I met a young, Hispanic lady with a terminal illness, who came from limited means and had poor access to health care.

She spent several weeks in the hospital, and I had opportunities to meet with her and her family. She chose to secure hospice services. She was a Christian, and her valor and faith impacted my life.

She lived only a week or two after being in hospice, but I know she is with the Lord now, no longer suffering pain or illness. These are the rewarding aspects of being a health care provider.

About Hermana Melinda

Why are you Baptist?

I am a Baptist because I was born into the Baptist faith, and because I truly believe in the teachings the faith represents.

Who were/are your mentors, and how did/do they influence you?

My maternal grandfather, Dr. Ignacio Gonzalez, was a pastor and led many congregations. My maternal grandmother, Gregoria Gonzalez, was a missionary and was very active in the Unión Femenil Misionera in the church. My Aunt Olga Uribe influenced me to become a nurse. They influenced me always to work hard to achieve my educational goals and to put God first always.

My pastor Dr. Julio Guarneri constantly has prayed for me and has taught me, "God is always working in our lives."

My husband Samuel Rodriguez Jr. always has supported me through tough times and good times. He has been my cheerleader and always has prayed for me.

What is your favorite Bible verse or passage? Why?

My favorite Bible verse is Jeremiah 29:11—"For I know the plans I have for you,' says the Lord. 'They are plans for good and not for disaster, and to give you a future and a hope.'"

As I started my teaching career at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, I found a small piece of paper in one of my nursing books. It had this verse on it. I found out one of my nursing students slipped it in my book. She told me it was her favorite verse, and she wanted to share the message with me.

The words ring true now, and I can see how the Lord has carried me

through my 65 years of life.