**2020 YEAR OF THE NURSE: A FOCUS ON HOLISTIC NURSING**

CIH Highlight- Healing Touch

**Nurse Highlights:**

# Lynn MenninLynn Mennin, BSN, RN, HTP-A

**Complementary & Integrative Health Nurse NAHA level 1 Certified Aromatherapist Whole Health Coach Champion**

## Q: Why did you become a nurse?

A: I come from a long line of nurses in my family. My father was a Critical Care nurse and actually retired from the CGVAMC. My great

grandmother on my father’s side was a nurse, as well; I still have her stethoscope and glass syringe needle set. I remember my father having such pride for taking care of Veterans. He taught me to take my time with people; to honor and value them. He also taught me the importance of touch; that even the intubated and sedated patient could benefit from their hair being gently washed or their feet massaged. I started my nursing career in his footsteps, becoming a Critical Care nurse in 2006, enjoying the intricate detail and challenge that the ICU brings. Eight years later, I found that I wanted to build upon the therapeutic connection with patients, bringing healing in a more holistic way. I took Healing Touch level 1 training in 2014 and it provided such a meaningful and deeper level of healing that I had never experienced with Veterans before. I quickly saw the value in recognizing a whole person’s experience, especially while being hospitalized. I couldn’t go back from that. I was then compelled to seek how I could help this nurturing and holistic side of healthcare grow. Others

sought this vision for the VA, as well, and so, the Complementary and

Integrative Health (CIH) Nursing positions came about in 2018. I was fortunate to become one of the CIH Nurses at the CGVAMC and am proud to be part of the effort to help lead our VA Medical Center back to the historical composition and core value of nursing, nourishing patient- centered and holistic care.

## Q: How is holistic nursing relevant now more than ever?

A: The foundation of nursing has always been holistically minded, starting with Florence Nightingale. She believed that the relationship of people and their environment, as well as unity and wellness, played a significant role on a person’s health. CIH emphasizes patient empowerment, self-care and wellness. This has always been important as it can rejuvenate a person to learn how to live their life more fully. Holistic nursing involves learning how to show kindness to yourself; knowing when you are running low and needing to be replenished. This self-compassion is developed by intentionally practicing activities that take care of our mental, emotional and physical health.

Considering the pandemic, we are all experiencing some form isolation and fear, which can perpetuate anxiety, depression and even pain. However, to find connection during these times with others and to intentionally practice self-care is something we can pro-actively do to help bring light to these darker times. It is relevant now more than ever because we cannot pour from empty cups. With the strength and tenacity of spirit that people are being called to provide right now, we need to be doing all we can to ensure our cups are being filled.

# Vada CampbellVada Campbell, RN-BC, HTP

**Inpatient Pain Management Case Manager NAHA level 1 Certified Aromatherapist**

## Q: Why did you become a nurse?

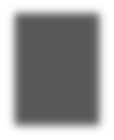
A: I became a nurse in 1990 because I found great comfort in helping others. My mother and great grandmother were nurses and it just seemed to come natural. Medical conversations over dinner were very common, so I wasn’t easily disturbed by

them. I had worked as a Systems Analyst for a large banking system prior to Nursing. It just felt cold and not rewarding. Nursing has been the best career move I could’ve made. Nothing is more rewarding than saving a life or helping others get well faster.

## Q: How is holistic nursing relevant now more than ever?

A: Holistic Nursing is very relevant in these times of opioid crisis in the US. Through implementation of Integrative therapies, we have reduced opioid prescribing and use by at least 54% overall since 2014. The best feedback is the Veterans’, who continually say that if they could have integrative therapies everyday, they would not need medications.

# Healing Touch (HT) in WNC VA HCS:

In 2014, during hospital week, I (Vada) tried a Healing Touch session, given to me by a volunteer, and had profound relief of pain in my feet. I had severe Plantar Fasciitis in both feet and was working in a role that required being on them all day. I then went to our CNO, David Przestrzelski, and said, “We HAVE to have this for

Veterans! I can not believe how much pain relief I got with one 15 minute session.” He said, “Do this. I will support it.” I was hearing, “Do the work.”

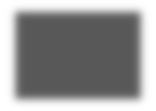
I then completed the 5 levels of training through the Healing Touch Program. Coming from an ICU background, this was hard for me. My brain was very science- oriented, and some of the theories behind Healing Touch confused me. My Healing Touch Mentor, Anne Boyd, would say: “It is not for us to

understand, that is up to our higher

Lynn Mennin Performing Healing Touch Photo Credit: Vada Campbell, RN-BC, HTP

power (whomever you believe in). We can not begin to understand this.” And she always said: “Just Do the Work!”, these were the words of the founder of the Healing Touch Program, Janet Mentgen, also an RN.

Healing Touch was implemented at CGVAMC beginning in 2015. It took a lot of leg work and research to find people who could help get this modality off the ground. A workgroup was started to help develop a procedure as well as documentation and training. Kathy Bryson, RN, was at the time a Case Manager for Cardio Thoracic Surgery. She had a passion for Healing Touch and wanted to see it happen here at the VA. Together, we developed the necessary tools to allow for this at our facility . Trish Rux, RN, had already started using Healing Touch in the Hospice unit and was having great success with decreasing pain and discomfort. She also helped coordinate the program and assisted with the expansion to the CLC. We later spread Healing Touch to the Inpatient setting.

Now that the two CIH RNs are in place and have had time to learn and grow, they have made great strides to increase Healing Touch sessions and have further improved our patient satisfaction in pain management and reduction of anxiety.

**Nurse Executive Highlight:**



***“I felt like there was so much going on in my body before you did Healing Touch. I felt scattered, physically and emotionally.***

***Afterwards, I feel like it smoothed everything out. I just feel***

***balanced."***

***- Veteran response to HT***

**David Przestrzelski, MS, RN – ADPCS/Chief Nurse Executive**

## David Przestrzelski, Chief Nurse ExecutiveQ: Why did you become a nurse?

A: I started working in a hospital when I was 16 years old. After deciding that professional golfer was not going to be my career, I thought Medicine and then watched in the many settings to which I was exposed. I saw the relationships between patients and every role in the hospital and was always impressed with impact of

nurses’ caring, advocacy, observation skills worthy of the best mystery stories and a career field in which there were limitless opportunities.

## Q: How is holistic nursing relevant now more than ever?

A: I spent Christmas of 1970 as a volunteer nursing assistant at St. Christopher’s Hospice, the very first hospice. In conversation with Dame Cicely Saunders, the founder of the Hospice movement, who was nurse, social worker, physician and entrepreneur, I had opportunity to learn caring beyond the numbers and science. I was introduced to the healing power of touch, presence, prayer, Christmas carols, fragrance and shared joy. Fifty years later, holism is timeless and even more

important today in the COVID era when the joy of a smile is hidden behind a mask; the EYES have it.