

Ep #6: Day 1 as a Nurse Practitioner with Gina



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Sarah Michelle

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Welcome to *Becoming a Stress-Free Nurse Practitioner*, a show for new NPs and students that want to pass their board exam the first time and make that transition from RN to NP as seamless as possible. I'm your host Sarah Michelle. Now, let's dive into today's episode.

Hey friends. On this episode, I thought it would be really interesting to talk to a former student of mine who is now a brand-new nurse practitioner. And by brand new I literally mean she started her new job this week and has worked two days now as the real deal. How exciting is that?

I have plans in the works for you guys to do this episode, an episode with a nurse practitioner at the six-month mark. And also with a nurse practitioner at the one-year mark. I really want to showcase the evolution of your first year as an NP. And how to manage the excitement, the jitters, and the inevitable little bits of impostor syndrome that are bound to pop up.

So let me introduce you to Gina. Gina, why don't you tell the listeners a little bit about you and where you started working this week. I am like so excited for you.

Gina: Thank you. And thanks for having me. Hi, I'm Gina. I graduated with my BSN in 2012. I worked the majority, pretty much all of my nursing career in critical care, also dabbled in education. I graduated with my MSN in August, tested in November, and just started as an infectious disease NP. So a lot of excitement here.

Sarah: You're a brave soul to do a critical care background.

Gina: Yeah.

Sarah: I did oncology most of my time. But I did like this brief one-year stint where I worked in PACU and it was not my field whatsoever. Where did you work in critical care? Like what area?

Gina: It was just like a medical ICU. It was like... our unit was half medical half surgical.

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Sarah: Wow, that's so cool.

Gina: Yeah, I did the medical

Sarah: Do you feel like that might hinder you in the primary care field or you think that'll help you?

Gina: I think hinder, honestly. Like when I did my clinical, you know, for family nurse practitioner and I was in a family doctor's office, I mean, like pharmacology wise, med wise, you know, I'm used to acute stuff. So the chronic things was really something that I had to brush up on. And really, you know, reeducate myself on.

Sarah: Yeah, it's kind of the chronic stuff is its own beast, in a way.

Gina: It really is. And I think harder, honestly.

Sarah: Yeah, absolutely. And I think it kind of surprises me, because I know you had that job lined up in urgent care. How did you end up picking infectious disease instead?

Gina: Well, honestly, I interviewed for that urgent care job. It was my first interview, and I was actually offered the job on the spot. And I agreed but hadn't, you know, signed the contract yet. And I was excited, you know, but there was something that just didn't sit right with me. I didn't know what it was, maybe because I hadn't passed yet. So there was still all this unknown, you know? And I took my test November 30th and I passed.

And the very next day I got a phone call. And it was from a doctor that I had worked with when I worked all those years in ICU. And just said, "Hey, do you want to be my NP?" I like to follow my instincts, trust my gut. And it was like a sign almost, it just felt right. And I was like, "Yeah, sure."

Sarah: It's crazy how it can kind of happen like that too. Because, you know, you read all these posts on the page, like people are applying, applying, applying. But sometimes it's just like fate, like it almost just like lands in your lap, this perfect job that you weren't even sure you were

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looking for. Because I know you were kind of torn up a little bit about how you were going to tell the urgent care you weren't coming anymore.

Gina: Yeah, that took some preparation. I practiced a lot of what I was going to say.

Sarah: I like it. I like it.

Gina: I just, you know, it was a hard phone call to make because I was really appreciative of, you know, their offer. But something sat right with me with that infectious disease physician. And the doctor, I respect so much. And I knew that he'd be a good teacher. And it was an inpatient position also, which is something I had originally wanted. So just kind of checked all my boxes.

Sarah: And being taught by good teachers is really important too. You know, going somewhere where you've almost got a little bit of a level of comfort can only help you go further as a nurse practitioner too.

Gina: Yeah, that's helped a lot. Especially this week when I started like, I was nervous but nothing with him. You know, I knew that he'd teach me. I knew he'd treat me well and teach me all the things I needed to know. You know, he knows that I'm a new grad. He knows that I have a lot to learn and he's up for it so.

Sarah: Well it sounds like he's up for it if he's calling you the week after Thanksgiving saying, "Come be my nurse practitioner." Right?

Gina: Yeah. And I figure what better time to specialize in infectious disease than during a pandemic?

Sarah: Amen. You're going to be learning all the stuff about COVID along the way. Maybe you'll be teaching me some stuff.

Gina: I might be a glutton for punishment, who knows?

Sarah: Now, let's see. Right now it's middle of February when we're recording this episode. So it took you a few months there to get

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credentialed. Kind of what did that process look like? And, you know, do you really have any kind of tips that you can offer on that process too?

Gina: The credentialing part, luckily his office helped me a lot with that. The biggest thing for me was the state licensing. I didn't know what I was getting myself into. It took about a month because there are so many things you need to send in and the application and this and that. And I think my best advice would be to get on your state board site and know what you're going to have to do before you apply. So you can have all your ducks in a row and do it. Because I am the queen of not having any ducks in a row, so it took me a little bit longer.

Sarah: You are absolutely like preaching to the choir right now. I can't tell you like how many students reach out and they're like, "I passed, like, I don't automatically get a license?" And I'm like, "No, that's not how it works in any capacity.

And I purposely wanted to ask you that question because I get asked about credentialing all the time. There's really no shortcut to it. There really aren't a whole lot of ways to do it yourself. I know people have finagled some stuff. But a lot of it is handled by your employer. And so there's nothing that you could be doing, other than supplying like the information when they ask for it, obviously, that's really going to push that along. It's really just kind of a waiting game.

Gina: Right. Like having things on hand. Like they needed my BSN diploma, just things like that. And I had to hunt for them everywhere and call my mom like, "Mom, do you have my BSN diploma?" I couldn't find anything.

Sarah: It was bizarre for me when I was getting credentialed. They were asking me the different elementary schools I went to because I went to like four different elementary schools. And I'm like, "I can't even think back that far now." You know, that seems like so long in the past before I was ever even in the nurse practitioner realm.

Gina: Yeah, and they need to know about elementary schools.

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Sarah: Yeah. I was like, “Well, they're definitely going to know I'm the real deal. They're definitely going to figure out I'm from Eastern Kentucky real quick.”

Now, what have you been doing since you've had this long process to kind of prepare to start this new job? Because that really seems to be a big source of anxiety for a lot of those NPs in our new NP Facebook group.

Gina: I, honestly, I took a lot of notes like when I did your review, and when I was studying, and doing practice questions. I mean, I have a binder full of notes. And I reviewed my notes a lot. Like if I was bored, or just like something popped in my head, I just went back and reviewed all my stuff I had used to prepare for boards.

Sarah: And people definitely should do that. You know, you spent all this money and all this time to prepare for boards. Why are you throwing this stuff away when you pass the board exam? I mean, it's absolutely mind blowing to me. I'm like, use that stuff. I mean you invested so much time into it.

But anyways, to get back to the point, are there like any apps or anything that you're using, any books that you're using along the way?

Gina: No books for me. I asked the physician I'm going to be with for any recommendations before I started. I'm like, “Hey, is there anything I can read or look over?” And he's like, “No, you'll learn it when you come.”

Sarah: Learn on the job.

Gina: Yeah, I like it Epocrates a lot.

Sarah: I absolutely love Epocrates.

Gina: I love Epocrates. And I researched a lot of COVID stuff because I knew that I was going to be seeing it in my area. It's getting better, but it was really getting bad here. So I researched a lot of COVID.

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Sarah: So you are mentally prepared for all the COVID patients coming your way, right?

Gina: Yes. And then I got COVID like, a week... right before I started the job. So I'm like, "This is perfect. I have the antibody. I'm starting in infectious disease. I'm good."

Sarah: You know literally all the ins and outs of COVID at this point.

Gina: Yeah, I'm like the COVID queen here.

Sarah: So I think the biggest question of all is, how did you feel on day one? How did the day go? Did you feel ready? Did you feel nervous? Did you actually see any patients? Like give the listeners all the details because I'm sure they're very excited and anxious to hear.

Gina: So the one and only bad thing about my first day was my badge picture that they took. It's horrible.

Sarah: That's survivable, you'll be okay.

Gina: Yeah, I was like, "I'm putting a sticker of my face on that one." My first day was great. I was nervous, you know, naturally. But a good nervous. But more than anything I was just so excited because it was just a day and a moment that I had been waiting for so long.

Sarah: Yeah.

Gina: I was working in a hospital that I have worked at since 2012. So I was comfortable in the hospital, I knew the physician. I was just excited. I was so excited.

Sarah: Time to finally make your evolution to the real deal, right?

Gina: Right. Right. It felt so good. I went and bought new scrubs before my first day.

Sarah: I was going to say do you wear like the traditional white coat in your setting? Or do you wear scrubs or how's that look?

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Gina: I wear scrubs. They're making all the, you know, physicians and mid-levels wear scrubs because of COVID. And I don't wear a white coat, I want to get one. He has told me to get an embroidered one. So that's on the way. Just been wearing a black lab jacket.

Sarah: You'll eventually get there to the white coat game, apparently your embroidered white coat.

Gina: Yeah, it's going to be embroidered.

Sarah: How is your orientation process structure? You know, when will you like officially be the real deal and kind of doing things on your own?

Gina: So, I'm his first nurse practitioner ever.

Sarah: Wow.

Gina: He's been practicing for over 30 years and has never had an NP. And right now he is actually the only infectious disease doctor we have in this valley. So it's really just kind of him and I right now with ID. So we really don't have like a set structure. We're just kind of playing it by ear and winging it.

But on my second day, actually, I went in and saw patients by myself. He asked me to and I was like, "Okay." We, you know, reconvened afterwards, went over them, and he let me do the notes.

Sarah: It sounds like you're already the real deal.

Gina: Maybe kind of.

Sarah: On day two?

Gina: Yeah, for like two hours that day I was.

Sarah: That's really awesome, you should be really proud of yourself for even having the confidence to be able to do that. Because I know there are a lot of people out there that couldn't even like fathom doing that on day two.

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Gina: It felt good. I really had to just remember, you know, where I come from, all this preparation, all this education that I put into this, and just be confident in that. And just kind of went with it, and it went great.

Sarah: And I think people forget that point. Like there's so much work to get to this point. But there's almost so much experience that comes along with that. Like you've spent all this time being a nurse, you spent all this time in school, and doing clinical rotations. Like you are ready for this moment whether you realize it or not.

And once you pass your board exam, like it is time to get out there and start doing that. And I really want to push people not to wait too long after they pass their board exam either, to get into this stuff, because then you start playing the mind game a little bit too. Like, "Do I really know this stuff?"

Gina: Yeah, because if you don't, you know, they say you don't use it, you lose it. So I was pretty lucky to get something so soon. Plus, like I said, I, you know, I'd still go over notes and try to research and prepare myself as much as possible. But I felt pretty good.

Sarah: Yeah, just keep pulling yourself back together all along the way, all throughout the credentialing.

Gina: Yeah, exactly.

Sarah: Now, another really important question that I want to ask you is how you've been managing, like any impostor syndrome that might kind of pop up along the way. Like what really pulls you through that sort of stuff?

Gina: So this one was my favorite question. I felt it, I did. I felt it for a very, very brief moment on my first day. But I am really good at kind of bringing myself back in. And like self-talk, and I'm like, "Hey." Back to like, "you've been a nurse for so long. You went through grad school, all this education, all these clinicals, all this board prep. Like you're a nurse practitioner, you earned this, you worked for this, you're meant to be here." You know, and I just snapped myself out of it. I felt like if you just go in with that mindset like,

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“You're meant to be here. You earned this.” You know? “You're the nurse practitioner, do your thing.” So that was my moment.

Sarah: And just telling yourself over and over like, “This isn't a fluke that I'm here.” Like, it wasn't a fluke that that infectious disease doctor called you like, “Hey, I want to work with you. And I've never had a nurse practitioner before.” I mean, you've obviously stood out to him in some capacity to even be able to get that phone call. And so really kind of owning that energy is really important as a new nurse practitioner too.

Gina: Right. You just kind of give yourself credit for everything you've gone through, all the prep you've done, you know?

Sarah: And that's something I even have to like remind myself of sometimes. Just being, you know, like being a nurse practitioner before the age of 30 is kind of its own world in its own way. And so there are almost a little impostor syndrome things that pop up with that. But I'm like, “I would not be where I am today if I had not put in all this work to be here. Like I deserve to be here.” And so even like me in the review course space, I have to remind myself of that a little bit too. Impostor syndrome can pop up all the way across the board.

Gina: See, I know it will for me, you know, I can see that. Like the first time I sit down and get to write my own antibiotics for someone, you know what I mean? I'm sure it's going to pop up, probably a little even harder then. But, you know, I just feel like talk yourself out of it.

Sarah: Yeah, that's kind of a fun day too. To be like, “I can write a prescription now.”

Gina: Right, I look forward to that day.

Sarah: I remember like my very first day as a nurse and one of the patients needed Tylenol or something. And I turned to the nurse I was precepting with, I'm like, “Do you want to go like pull that out together?” And she's like, “It's Tylenol. Like, you can go pull that out yourself out of the pyxis.” And I was like, “I'm a real nurse now. Like when did this happen?”

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Gina: Well, after I did my very first note on Thursday, because I can do my notes from home, they have me set up.

Sarah: Oh, that's really nice.

Gina: And I put my note in and I was like, "Oh my gosh, that's my name."

Sarah: Yeah, like it says nurse practitioner after my name.

Gina: Yeah, I was like, "Oh my gosh, it feels so strange."

Sarah: That's so fun too. Like those first few days of excitement, I feel like nothing replaces that.

Gina: Yeah, it was a cool moment. It was a good first two days, I'm excited for next week. I'm excited for all the remainder of my time with him. And all the things I have to learn.

Sarah: And all the things you're going to continually learn and evolve into too. I think it's going to be a really cool experience for you.

Gina: I think so too. I'm excited.

Sarah: My very last question is, what would be your biggest piece of advice to a new graduate nurse practitioner that's on the job hunt out there? You know, is there anything in particular that you would recommend they do?

Gina: I know it's easier to say than do, but don't get discouraged. Because I know for some people it just takes time, you know. And I feel like, if you just sit back, apply for jobs that you're interested in. And, you know, a lot of people won't hire new grads, but a lot of people will. And the right thing will fall in your lap. So I guess just not being discouraged. And I know that's hard.

Sarah: I literally was talking to a student last week, and this is no exaggeration, I don't want to like scare anybody. But she applied for 100 jobs, okay? And the 100th job, this is no joke, is the one she got.

Gina: Wow.

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Sarah: I was like that persistence, you know, just that perseverance. Like, if you want a job, you're going to find a job and you're going to do whatever it takes to get that job. But it can be a long process. So definitely, you know, don't get your head down. Keep reviewing your stuff, you know, like we were talking about earlier, going through your board review stuff, just kind of keeping yourself fresh. Because that opportunity is going to come along, and you want to be ready for it when it does.

Gina: Also another thing that I forgot about was maybe like, kind of market yourself, you know.

Sarah: Yes.

Gina: If you worked as a registered nurse, like I left the ICU last year in February and just did education full time. But I was still in the hospital because I taught clinicals. So when I would see, you know, physicians and stuff that I have known from when I was in ICU, I'd be like, "Hey, need an NP? Or you know anyone that needs an NP?"

Sarah: Hey, hey, hey.

Gina: I'm like, "Hello, if you need anyone let me know." I did that a lot.

So if you work somewhere as an RN, put it out there that you're an NP and you're looking for a job. And I think that's honestly what probably did it for me.

Sarah: And even talking to your preceptors too. Because your preceptors have already network because they're already working as a nurse practitioner in that capacity. And so they might know of something that's going to pop up that hasn't even popped up yet. You know, things that might be in the talks or things that are in the works. And so utilizing all of your resources is really important too.

Gina: Yeah, I agree. And keep checking, if you don't hear from them keep checking back. Don't let them forget about you.

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Sarah: Check and check and check. That's how another student of mine last week got a job because I was like, "You know, just reach out, reach out again." You know, if they fill the position obviously don't keep reaching out. That's overkill. But as long as that position is open keep being at the forefront, keep being in their minds. And you never know, it might happen for you.

Gina: I mean, I even took my son, I have a six-year-old little boy also and a 10-year-old little girl. I took him to his checkup and his pediatrician because I love PEDs, that's always been my love. And I was like "Hey, you need an NP anytime soon?"

Sarah: I did another episode with Dr Bradshaw about contract negotiations. And if I remember right, she was talking about like her mother-in-law was telling her doctor like, "Hey, if you need a nurse practitioner, I know someone." Like you never know where the opportunity is going to arise.

Gina: Yeah, so have your family market you also.

Sarah: Well, Gina, it has been super great talking to you. It's been super great getting your perspective, like literally being a brand-new nurse practitioner. And hopefully on a future episode, we can catch up and kind of see where you're at and see how you're feeling about infectious disease too.

Gina: I would love that, anytime.

Sarah: And I want to show you guys people are excited to be new nurse practitioners. Not everyone's terrified out of their minds. There's a lot of horror stories out there. But there's so much beauty in this profession and I want to showcase it for you guys. But that's it for today. And I'll see you guys next week.

Now, to celebrate the launch of the show, I'm going to be giving away a Medelita gift card which will allow you to go buy a gorgeous white coat when you're ready. Now, I'm going to be giving away a gift card to two lucky listeners who subscribe, rate, and review the show on iTunes. It

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doesn't have to be a five-star review, although I really do hope you love the show. I want your honest feedback so I can continue creating a show that provides tons of value for you guys as nurse practitioners.

Visit stressfreenp.com/podcastlaunch to learn more about the contest and how to enter. And I'll be announcing the winners on the show in an upcoming episode.

Thanks for listening to *Becoming a Stress-Free Nurse Practitioner*. If you want more information about the different types of support we offer to students and new NPs, visit stressfreenp.com. See you next week.