

Sulaiman Bangura



Seeking a better life

When Sulaiman Bangura came to America from Sierra Leone 17 years ago at the age of 23, he was seeking a better life. He found it not only in the United States, but also through a rewarding career in nursing.

Now as an RN for at-home hospice services with Capital Caring Health, the largest non-profit provider of elder health, advanced illness, hospice, and at-home care services for the Maryland, Virginia, and Washington D.C. area, Bangura looks forward to seeing his patients every day.

More than just a job

"When I first got to the United States, someone told me that I should become a certified nursing assistant," say Bangura. "They said it was a field where you can always get a job."

But it soon became more than a job to Bangura; it was a calling. He progressed from working as a CNA at a nursing home to becoming a Licensed Practical Nurse. He then trained to become a Registered Nurse and ultimately got his Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree.

He has worked at Capital Caring for the past 13 years, where he has become passionate about helping people at the end of life. "I fell in love with the job," Bangura says. "Every patient is unique. You never know who you'll meet with each admission."

Covid concerns

The onset of the novel coronavirus pandemic dramatically changed his work. Suddenly he had to connect with patients through virtual telehealth visits.

Bangura says that was really hard. “Part of our job is to make patients feel like they aren’t alone, like someone is there to listen,” he says.

Since the hospice team has been able to make home visits again, they have been careful to take precautions for both the patients and themselves. They pre-screen patients, as well as any family member or caretaker who’ll be present, to check for common symptoms of the virus before each visit.

Bangura goes home each night to his wife, three children and both his mother and mother-in-law, and so he worries about getting the virus or bringing it home. But he says everyone is very mindful about safety at work. “We wear face masks and shields and I wash my hands and sanitize all the time,” he explains. “And then I wash my clothes as soon as I get back home.”

The pandemic has been stressful for everyone, Bangura says, but he believes it’s been especially hard on nurses because of the way it impacts the way they can provide care.

“Hospice is a special kind of nursing,” he explains. “It’s not just about caring for the patient, but also the family.” He says working with patients at the end of life is very personal. It’s important to build confidence and trust with the patient and their family and to let them know that someone is there for them. The most important thing, he says, is to treat each patient with respect and dignity, whether that’s in person or virtually.

Life’s blessings

Bangura’s key to managing stress is taking one day at a time. In his spare time he likes to listen to music. He enjoys reading books. And he’s very interested in the politics of his adopted country. Bangura walks often and has an exercise machine at home, both of which are great for managing stress. But he especially enjoys weekends watching soccer with his friends.

Most of all, Bangura is passionate about his job in hospice care. “I wish more people were aware of hospice services — it’s such a huge blessing,” he says, adding that hospice patients tend to live a little longer, especially when they begin soon after their end of life diagnosis.

Sulaiman was recently recognized as a Special Ceca Foundation Award Winner for his dedication and professionalism as an RN case manager. His hospice patients and their families were quick to praise his work, saying he consistently displays compassion and goes above and beyond for all his patients.

This is a job where caring for others is just second nature, but Bangura would be the first to tell you he gets much more in return. “When a patient says, ‘Thank you so much,’ it really makes my day,” he says. “It’s just a special feeling to be able to help.”