



Flight Nursing

From Medical School to the Navy

An Interview with
Naara Zapata, RN, NP, Flight Nurse, Northwell Health



Naara Zapata

EDITORS' NOTE Prior to her current role, Naara Zapata was a registered nurse in the surgical intensive care unit at Long Island Jewish Medical Center, as well as in the coronary care unit at Saint Francis Hospital on Long Island and the immediate care unit at the State University of New York's (SUNY) Upstate University Hospital in Syracuse. She received her M.S. from Hofstra University and her B.S. from SUNY Buffalo. Zapata was among 28 members of the first graduating class from the Hofstra Northwell School of Graduate Nursing and Physician Assistant Studies who earned nurse practitioner (NP) degrees in one of three specialties.

Will you discuss your role as a flight nurse at Northwell Health?

When I first came to Northwell Health, I already had some experience. I was hired into a new unit that had a young staff. From the beginning, I was encouraged to use my experience to mentor the younger nurses, and it gave me a great sense of pride to share these experiences and be in an active learning environment.

Feeling that support and encouragement to push and develop younger nurses meant I felt that support and encouragement to push and develop myself as well.

When the opportunity came to do flight nursing, I had to think about what it entailed and if I was capable of doing it. It seemed somewhat overwhelming to leave the bedside and be in a clinical situation where I was not going to be in the hospital with the security of having many resources around.

However, I took it as an opportunity to challenge myself and be a better clinician. In doing that, I learned much more about overcoming fear of change or doing something completely new.

I now have more confidence in my own capabilities and I feel incredibly supported. The investment Northwell Health makes in employees is clear from the start. They remind us of the impact we can have.

While I was there, they made the announcement that they were going to open the graduate school of nursing. It almost seemed to me like it was a story unfolding for me.

Will you highlight the role of the nursing school as part of Northwell Health?

The establishment of the school of nursing was very proactive in addressing the healthcare needs we face. The healthcare of our community requires that we be proactive, not reactive. Historically, we have just treated illness, but that has not achieved the results we desire. We spend so much money on healthcare as a nation while communities get sicker.

We realize we need to change our approach, which is by establishing providers that have the same ideals and approach to healthcare, expanding patients' access to care, and promoting health and wellness while treating illness.

The school itself is innovative in its approach and educational style. It is built for the self-directed learner. Our school is case-based and each person is expected to become a critical thinker and to develop a plan that is always considerate of individuality and tailored to the care of the specific patient.

We have such a diverse population, so even though guidelines are wonderful, we need to consider individual patient needs. ●

An Interview with Tyler Lopachin, MD,
Zucker School of Medicine at Hofstra/Northwell



Tyler Lopachin

EDITORS' NOTE Tyler Lopachin is an ensign in the US Navy who was commissioned as a lieutenant at the Zucker School of Medicine at Hofstra/Northwell's recent commencement. Now that he has graduated from medical school, he will be training in emergency medicine at the Naval Medical Center Portsmouth, Virginia.

Will you discuss your experience as a recent graduate of the Zucker School of Medicine at Hofstra/Northwell?

The biggest advantage of Zucker was the patient care we were able to engage in right away, which was amazing. The fact that we became EMTs immediately and, during the first week of medical school, I was in the back of an ambulance riding with a critically ill patient going to the hospital and seeing that patient's initial care was extraordinary.

It ultimately led me into emergency medicine. We had our initial clinical experiences early as well, so I got to treat patients and gather history and physical symptoms a few months into medical school; many other institutions don't do that. That is what drew me to apply to this school.

Are the importance of the personal touch and human connection with patients taught at the school or has this been lost as a result of technology?

I don't think these have been lost. I have heard from those at other medical schools that there has been a bigger push for video lectures so, for the first two years, students can hang out at home and watch their lectures at double speed.

Zucker has mandatory attendance, which means we had to come in. I was happy about that, because I wanted to come in and speak with those from whom I was learning. Also, we were constantly in patients' rooms talking to people. Through this communication early on, they taught us how to talk to patients as their care providers.

This is more difficult than one would think. I figured that I could walk in and talk to patients because I had worked in customer service, but it's tough to do when you need to explain something really complicated, like heart failure, to someone with no medical knowledge.

How broad was the curriculum when it comes to experiencing the whole continuum of healthcare and did it provide you an opportunity to see many different aspects of medicine?

Yes, especially in the third year when we were working across six different specialties in a few weeks – we got to see many branches of medicine. If we were super interested in a certain area, they offered us a chance to get more experience in that area.

Would you discuss the level of talent of the student body at Zucker?

I made 99 close friends among my class of 100 and a few best friends – I have a feeling that our alumni group is going to be very strong.

Because it was a hard school to get into, it drove me to be my best self. I come from Emerson College (Boston, MA), which is a film school, and I was surrounded by people who went to Harvard and Yale. This forced me to push myself harder and give Zucker everything I had.

Having people who are already at the top of their respective fields and classes coming into Zucker upped the playing field. Also, having people who were genuinely excited to be there and to learn made it so much easier when we would study since everyone would put in the work. ●