

Oklahoma's Nursing Times



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Nurse Practitioner **Credits Mom, Grandmother For Career**

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Linda Varghese, RN, NP

Earned bachelor's degree in New York. Moved to Dallas in 2015 to work as ICU nurse in NVICU unit before moving to Mustang, OK.

story by Van Mitchell, Staff Writer

Linda Varghese credits her mother and seeing how people cared for her ailing grandmother which served as a catalyst to becoming a nurse.

"My mom is a nurse and I just saw how nurturing and caring she was as a person. She always came back and told me the stories of her patients and that affected me" said Varghese, a Family Nurse Practitioner at Nerve Renewal, at 3705 NW 63rd Street, Suite 101 in Oklahoma City.

She added, "There was a time, when my grandmother was in a nursing home whom I was close to, and she became very sick and passed. That became the catalyst on my why to being a caretaker or that helper that aide patients to getting better or healthy. I want to

be able to be that go-to person for someone else. So that's really what fueled my passion to pursue nursing."

A Long Island, N.Y. native, Varghese earned her bachelor's degree at Adelphi University and in 2015 moved to Dallas to start her nursing career, where she worked as an ICU nurse in the NVICU unit where she helped treat patients who were post-stroke and had brain injuries who developed nerve damage.

"I knew I was making a difference within the walls of the hospital, but I quickly realized I wanted to make a difference on the outside," she said. "So, while I was doing that, I decided to pursue my Nurse Practitioner degree. I did full-time school, full-time work which allowed me to graduate from NP school in 2019."

Varghese transitioned from critical care to community care.

"I knew I was wanting to get out of critical care, an inpatient setting," she said. "I wanted to make a direct impact in the community, and so my degree allowed me to treat various types of patient populations. I wanted to treat differently, something a little alternative. I decided to pursue aesthetics in 2020. I was like, this is different. I'm helping patients in a different way and making a difference."

Varghese practiced aesthetic medicine for about two years, before moving to Mustang with her husband Philip and her two-year old son, Ryan.

"My husband is from here (Mustang), so we decided to move back here because this is his hometown," she said.

Varghese has worked at Nerve Renewal for seven months.

Nerve Renewal treatments are FDA-approved and use a drug-free treatment which involves electrical stimulation combined with a vitamin B-12 complex nutrient blend that helps reduce

neuropathy-related nerve pain and does not require recovery time after treatment.

"I am passionate about neuropathy. It's become my niche," Varghese said. "These patients that come see us, they're in a lot of pain and they have been dealing with it chronically for so long. I always was interested in alternative ways to help treat patients."

Varghese said Nerve Renewal offers patients an alternative treatment option.

"It's amazing that electrical stimulation therapy is an approved therapy option for our neuropathic patients" Varghese said. "We're able to help patients in a way where they're not being so reliant on their medications and it's non-invasive. Honestly, since I've been here, I've seen such a huge difference in almost every single patient that I've dealt with. They've had amazing results, and they just keep coming back. They just love coming here and they just love what the therapy is doing for them. Patients can regain their sleep

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Linda Varghese is a Family Nurse Practitioner with Nerve Renewal.

VARGHESE

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back and walk longer distances without help of assistive devices. It's been life changing to so many and I love seeing that change within the community."

Varghese said Nerve Renewal treats patients from 18 and older.

"Majority of our patients are 65 and older, so we see many Medicare/Medicaid patients. We even take Sooner Care patients, but almost all insurances approve the therapy," she said. "It's just incredible that we're able to reach that population. We also see young adults because they might have a genetic condition that's causing the neuropathy, or they had a stroke very early on and we're able to help them regain functionality and progress in their lives."

Varghese said it's rewarding seeing patients get relief from their pain.

"Some patients see the progress very quickly while some

it may take time. I just tell them to be patient and I encourage them to just trust the process, because everybody's severity of neuropathy is different," she said. "I have patients' family members who come and tell me how this therapy has helped their mom, dad, aunt, or uncle. "What we do here works. I'm pleased to see that change in their lives."

Varghese said she learned her work ethic watching her mother.

"I'm first generation South Indian- American. My parents were immigrants and they worked hard to create a better life for me" she said. "I saw my mother put in all the hard work as a mom and as a nurse. Growing up in my house, she worked long hours and dedicated time to so many others. I just started to have that same work ethic, to be hardworking and trying to be able to get my place in the world too. I really feel like I am making a difference."

For more information about Nerve Renewal visit <https://nerverenewalnow.com/>

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CAREERS IN NURSING:

'A SPECIAL ANGEL IN LIFE' - OU HEALTH TRANSPLANT INSTITUTE SAVES LIVES

story and photo by James Coburn, Staff Writer

Time is of the essence for patients waiting for organ transplants. Organ donors are desperately needed as the average wait for a kidney transplant is four years.

"It takes 10 to 12 years to be on a list to get a kidney on the East and West Coasts," said Pam Toho, RN, kidney and pancreas coordinator for pediatrics and adults at the OU Health Transplant Institute, located in Oklahoma City. "And in the Bible Belt here, our wait time is four to six years for them to get a kidney. So, all the people that can are flying into Oklahoma and the Bible Belt.

It's everyone's right to multi-list in many states to get a kidney, liver, or a pancreas quicker, Toho said. The OU Health Transplant Institute has a 275-mile radius of local organ offers that they receive first. If there is not a local organ match, then the search goes national.

"We want them to stay here at OU, but our whole mindset is to be an advocate for the patient," Toho said.

One of her favorite things about being a nurse is calling someone to say, "Hey, we have a potential organ offer for you. Today could be your day."

There remain a few hurdles to overcome before they get to the final finish line for an organ that matches them.

"We have to see if they have to be dialyzed. When we take their blood, we make sure there is no infection in their bodies because if we're going to transplant someone in the OR, we wipe their immune system out."

It takes three months for the immune system to rebound, so there should be no open wounds or sores present on the patient. Harm could be done if infections are present.

An adult male recently flew in from California where he had been on a waitlist for five years. The operating room was set for him after the crossmatch was done. Blood was flown in during the middle of the night. The medical staff observe patients closely to ensure their immune system is healthy.

"It's almost like a seesaw with doctors balancing their medications,

looking at peaks and troughs to get a therapeutic level," Toho explained. "That's what we look for, so your body doesn't attack the kidney and reject it."

Organ recipients continue to be monitored for three to five years, getting them evaluated and keeping them healthy. Once a transplant is completed, the patient is seen twice a week for the first three months; then once every two weeks for a couple of months, followed by once-a-month evaluations for a year or two.

"Then we refer them back to their nephrologist and see them once a year to keep tabs on the organ itself. We have a relationship to see if they need a kidney again," she continued.

The OU Health Transplant Institute averages 50-60 kidney transplants a year, involving both living kidney donors and diseased kidney donors. In 2023 there were 18 children's kidney transplants at Oklahoma Children's Hospital OU Health. So, for this year, there have been 13 pediatric kidney transplants, not including the fifteen 18-19-year-old recipients the United Network of Organ Sharing considers adults.

"That's exciting. It's been a while since we've had parents that were able to donate," Toho said.

However, it looks like two pediatric donations will be processed. Toho said these donations will give children the best long-lasting kidneys the OU Health Transplant Institute can offer.

"A living donor related kidney is the very best kidney," Toho said. "The length of time that it lasts — we've seen some people keep their kidneys as long as 30 years for a living donor. For a normal lifespan of a transplanted kidney from a deceased donor, which is an amazing gift of life as well, the average is seven to 10 years. And they will likely need another kidney."

Toho said it is her greatest privilege to work with a 38-person team to save lives. According to the United Network of Organ Sharing, the OU Health Transplant Institute has a 100 percent, 3-year-success rate for living donor and deceased



The OU Health Transplant Institute, located in Oklahoma City is meticulous in providing a safe outcome for organ donations at the OU Health Transplant Institute, says Pam Toho, RN, kidney and pancreas coordinator for pediatrics and adults.

donor transplants at Oklahoma Children's Hospital OU Health, Toho said.

It's hard for Toho to explain the joy that being part of an organ transplant team has brought to her life. Children ages four and 18 return

to see her.

"I have a relationship with all of these kids. You just form relationships with them forever," she said. "You feel like you are a special angel in their life. They just have a bond with you."

For more information about OU Health Transplant Institute visit <https://www.ouhealth.com/>.



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