Reflections:

I have had multiple opportunities to demonstrate care and compassion in the clinical setting this semester. My most memorable experience was the care of a severe alcoholic and his family. This particular patient had initiated a process of recovery from his alcoholism and been placed on a liver transplant list. For all intents and purposes he was given a second chance at life. However, after making many lifestyle changes, such as reorganizing his family and intimate relationships, this patient chose to return to destructive alcoholism and therefore forfeited his placement on the transplant list. This patient had some fairly complicated family involvement in his care. He had a wife, a girlfriend, and siblings that all had something to say in regards to both his detrimental behaviors and his prognosis. I felt a very personal connection to this patient’s situation, and I think that my own experiences helped me to give both him and his family the care and empathy that they deserved. It required an enormous amount of self-control and repression during clinical hours for me to provide nursing care for this patient without incorporating my own tortured emotions. This patient and his family made a significant impact on me and my profession as a nurse. In reflection of this patient's care, I now see my personal involvement in the case as an asset rather than a hindrance.

I feel as though I was able to grow in my ability to communicate effectively with my patients. I felt both an increase in my confidence and knowledge by the end of the semester. I am becoming noticeably more and more prepared to carry out teaching, discharge instructions, and change of shift report. The labor and delivery experience greatly contributed to my growth in patient teaching. However, one specific clinical experience that stands out for me, in regards to communication, was a discussion/teaching session that I had with a pneumonia patient. I actually used quite a bit of this conversation in my process recording. In using therapeutic conversation, I was able to motivate my patient to use his incentive spirometer. It was very rewarding and gave me a sense of hope and confidence for further teaching.

Safe and competent practice was a big focus of clinical this semester. I was able to practice learned skills and also attempt new ones. I was able to participate in multiple med passes as well. I was very happy with the process of passing meds this semester because I feel as though I learned something about every medication that I gave. After doing my own investigation of the prescribed medications, I was consistently questioned by my clinical instructor about important aspects of each drug. This readiness and attention not only helped me to build knowledge about certain medications, it also helped me to individualize them to my patient. This semester, I had the opportunity to actually mix and hang a banana bag. I had never heard of a banana bag before, nor had I mixed drugs, so this was exciting for me. I also gave a couple of subq injections, including the first time use of an insulin pen, removed IV catheters and Foleys, and attempted to insert a Foley on a female patient. These were all great experiences for my learning, and I was able to accomplish them safely and competently. I think my skill level has notably increased this semester, and I look forward to continued progression. This also brought about an increase in my ability to critically think. I have begun to put together medications with critical lab values, and disease processes with associated signs and symptoms. As opposed to last semester, this semester I felt as though I actually understood the meaning of my care and assessment, which was a very reassuring milestone.
Professionalism is one of the core values that seem to be innate and almost a common courtesy at this point in my education. However, professionalism proved to be fairly difficult for me at times in this semester, mostly due to the location and background of my clinical site. There were certain members of the health care team that I found it very difficult to work with, and had to force a great deal of restraint over myself in order to maintain my composure. It was one of the many obstacles that I had to face at my clinical site this semester, and surprisingly I can see now how I have gained qualities of professionalism and team work from the experience.

Holistic care is becoming more and more natural. I had the opportunity to care for two patients that spoke little to no English. I was able to use technology in order to help them participate in their own care. Both of these patients were so thankful for the attention I paid to their communication barriers, and I think it really made a difference in the outcome of their hospital stay. I hope that the core values that are beginning to be instilled within me as a nursing student will remain the basis of my practice for years to come.

This semester of clinical was hopefully the most difficult emotional obstacle I will ever be faced with. Looking back on that first day of clinical, I can honestly say that I never could have imagined that I would be sitting here today writing my summative reflections and studying for the final exam. Nursing has been my dream, my passion, and my mission in life for many years now. As we all know, the process of nursing school can be grueling, demanding, and exhausting all on its own. When I was confronted with such a severe emotional and economical tragedy, I felt as though my motivation, my ambition, and my support system had been stripped from my person. These thoughts and feelings are forefront in my mind when I reflect on the clinical semester. It seems like just yesterday that getting through a day of clinical took every last bit of energy that I had stored for the day. I remember feeling like I had been through a war by the end of the day, and feeling as though it would be impossible to progress. Day by day I’ve grown stronger and regained my focus through faith and healing. While my pain is still deeply immense, it has not only assisted me in the care of my patients, it has given me a determination for success that I never dreamt possible. I lost not only a loved one, but the biggest fan of my education. I am so thankful for the concern and support that the nursing program has showed to me, and my hope is that when I am a successful working RN I can provide for someone else the same inspiration and encouragement that has been shown to me.