

## Wenonah Ecung, MS, PhD, tells a story about the Human Side of medicine

Dr. Ecung, PhD served as Associate VP of Clinical Programs from 2003 to 2014 and VP of Clinical Administration from 2014 until her retirement in 2016. In an interview conducted in 2017 she talks about how her first experiences as a nurse at MD Anderson led her to discover her sense of vocation and values.



### *Discovering Who I Am*

So for me, working with oncology ... I found it very difficult. At that point in time, I was 20 and 21. And I had folks that were 18 and 19. How many years later, and I can still remember it. But they would be with us for eight, nine months at a time. We would celebrate birthdays and we would celebrate Christmas. And then sometimes, their family didn't make it, and we were there holding them as they took their last breath. And at 20 and 21, that got to be a little bit too much for me. So I thought, I can't do this anymore. So I left....

And I went to ... Memorial Hermann....and I worked their Medical Intensive Care for—I think it was a period of several months, maybe four months, four or five months. And I'll never forget, one night we had a young lady, and she was early teens, not too much younger than I was, who had overdosed with pills—didn't work, then proceeded to try to hang herself—didn't work, then cut her wrists. I remember as we performed CPR on her, resuscitated her....I remember thinking, oh my God, you've just attempted to do everything you possibly could to end your life. And I've come from a place where people were doing everything they possibly could to save their life. And that was the moment I made the decision, I'm going back. That's who I am. That's what I want to be.

And I applied back at Anderson for an outpatient position.

## About This Content

This interview clip was taken from an in-depth interview conducted for the Making Cancer History Voices Oral History Project. This ongoing project currently contains almost 400 interview hours with MD Anderson institution builders.

The transcript has been edited from the original.

The content is available for all uses.

**To explore the full interview go to:** <http://mdanderson.libguides.com/EcungW>

### Interview Clip Identification:

Session number and date: 01, 09-21-2016

Segment: 04

### Citations: Please provide the following information

Interview Subject's name, Clip Title, Date of Session, Historical Resources Center, Research Medical Library, The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center.

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