

Meeta Gandhi

Novant Health Presbyterian Medical Center, Manager of Operations

Age: 29

WHERE WERE YOU BORN?

Spartanburg, SC

HOW LONG HAVE YOU LIVED IN CHARLOTTE AREA?

3 years and 2 months, but Charlotte has been a second home to me my entire life! My grandfather and most of my mom's side of the family has lived here since the early 1970s.

TELL US A LITTLE BIT MORE ABOUT YOU?

If someone would have told me I would be here 10 years ago I would not have believed them. It is crazy how the people you meet, experiences you have along the way, all combined with life's timing can change your path entirely. Towards the end of my time at the University of South Carolina I came to realize through various courses that my passions lied within policy, leadership, people, and community. Completely changing my career path, I sought out internship opportunities which ended up being life changing for me. I encountered one of the best mentors I have ever had while interning at a cancer institute, and also learned about the impacts of patient outreach and education within a community while interning at a grant-funded healthcare program for the low income and uninsured population. These experiences allowed me to see the impact I can have on healthcare within a community without having a clinical background. I then applied for my Master of Health Administration degree at Armstrong in Savannah, GA (which is now Georgia Southern University) and finally felt like I was where I was meant to be. I then pursued Administrative Fellowship programs and was offered the position here in Charlotte at Novant Health. I rotated throughout the Charlotte market community hospitals along with Presbyterian Medical Center, which provided me with the unmatched experience to immerse myself within operations and how we provide expansive healthcare services to our community. My fellowship led me to taking on a leadership role within the organization, and I am proud to say I walk into work every day and love what I do. I could not have gotten here without the support and love from my family, mentors, closest friends, and beloved dog.

DURING YOUR TIME VOLUNTEERING FOR A COMMUNITY ACTIVITY OR PROJECT, WHAT IS YOUR MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT?

I frequently volunteer at the Hospitality House of Charlotte with my work family. We cook meals for the families that are staying there, donate supplies, and help with cleaning the space. The most memorable moment for me was when I was able to meet and speak with families that were staying at the Hospitality House while their loved ones were facing a medical hardship at a local Charlotte hospital. Hearing about how far they traveled to be able to be with their loved ones during the difficult time and how appreciative they were for having an affordable stay option made me feel so grateful to live in a community that has this option for families.

IN YOUR OPINION, HOW DO YOU CONTRIBUTE TO THE COMMUNITY? PLEASE BE AS DETAILED AS YOU CAN.

I contribute to the greater Charlotte community by my involvement and responsibilities both inside and outside of work. Through my career, my purpose each day is to contribute to the higher purpose of ensuring that all patients receive remarkable, safe, and quality care. Managing operations for Novant Health Presbyterian Medical Center allows me to evaluate, hardwire, or completely redesign our processes to ensure that our patients navigate through our facility and receive healthcare services in a way that is best for them. I also played a key role with preparing my facility for the COVID-19 pandemic. As soon as the first case tested positive in the county, we established facility surge plans and how we were going to safely treat the influx of COVID patients. I was responsible for ensuring we had all of the equipment needs secured and units rearranged to accommodate all patients. I led daily calls with facility and corporate leaders to ensure we were all communicating and prepared for whatever would come our way. My role has also recently evolved to include the management of the patient placement department, which ensures all patients are being connected and placed within our facility safely and appropriately. I am also the chair of the Asian Business Resource Group (BRG), which stands to promote a culture of diversity and inclusiveness within our organization and community. Our BRG aims to be the bridge between the Asian communities, provide consumer insight in order to deliver remarkable patient care, and improve health by identifying health disparities and culturally relevant interventions. We are currently focusing in on our long-term health equity goal, which is to increase the mammography screening rates for Asian women within the community. We are currently in the stages of planning a pilot program with a clinic to test out various solutions. The Asian BRG at Novant Health was also ranked as a top 20 Employee Resource Group (ERG) nationally & was awarded the ERG & Council Honors Award. Outside of work, I was a leader for the Diversity & Inclusion committee for the Greater Charlotte Healthcare Executives Group (GCHEG) for two years. With the committee being new, we pioneered the way for what we could bring to the members of GCHEG. We planned Equity Impact Circles in partnership with Community Building Initiative (CBI), and gathered a diverse group of Charlotteans from all different career paths to come together and talk about health equity in our community. I also became a trained facilitator for leading these conversations with CBI. We also established an Equity of Care Award for physicians within the greater Charlotte community who are leading the way to reducing

healthcare inequities through their career and/or research & innovations. Our committee also partners with organizations such as NAHSE along with the UNCC MHA program to organize volunteer activities within the Charlotte community.

I also enjoy volunteering my time to community non-profits such as the Hospitality House and Crisis Assistance Ministry. I am grateful to have these program offerings within our community. My work family and I meet to assemble and deliver breakfast bags to the members of our community at the Crisis Assistance Ministry. We also spend time at the Hospitality House cooking meals and supporting the operations of the house by cleaning and donating items. I am a trained Success Coach for Communities in Schools, and look forward to mentoring kids within the community. I am a true advocate for mentorship and lifting the younger generation higher in any way possible.

PLEASE LET US KNOW ANY AWARDS OR RECOGNITIONS YOU'VE RECEIVED IN YOUR PROFESSIONAL CAREER:

- Early Career Healthcare Executive Regent's Award, North Carolina, 2020

- Awarded by the American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE), and nominated by the Greater Charlotte Healthcare Executives Group (GCHEG)

WHAT ARE YOUR HOBBIES OR INTEREST?

My hobbies and interests include spending lots of time with my family, going for swims with my dog, and dogs, dogs, and more dogs. I also love supporting my football teams (go Gamecocks & go Panthers!), spontaneous cooking & experimenting with recipes, being in the sun and water, art & lettering, rooftop cocktails, and getting my nails done. To add to this very candid list, I also love to read books that guide women to grow both personally and professionally and continue breaking the glass ceiling.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE QUOTE THAT YOU STAND BY?

"The true meaning of life is to plant trees; under whose shade you do not expect to sit." – Nelson Henderson

WHERE DO YOU SEE YOURSELF IN 5 YEARS? 10 YEARS?

In 5 years, I see myself continuing to learn and grow as a healthcare leader within the field of operations. I hope to acquire more areas of responsibility and become a transformational leader who develops teams to their best and fullest potential. I also hope to continue to give back to the community outside of work and continue to connect with what makes Charlotte so special. Lastly, I see myself spending even more quality time with my loved ones and planning special trips with them (see bucket list question below!) In 10 years, I see myself taking the intricacies of my operational skillset and becoming a leader at a more strategic level for the organization. Taking the years of operational knowledge and team development, I would be well-equipped to be in a position of decision-

making and establishing priorities for strategic direction. I also see myself living somewhere with a beautiful yard for my future dogs.

CAN YOU SHARE ONE THING THAT IS ON YOUR BUCKET LIST?

To experience a National Geographic Unique Lodge of the World (Eco Lodge) which protects the habitat and natural & cultural heritage for generations to come. There are lodges around the world that allow you to immerse yourself within communities and experience them to the fullest. I aspire to travel to Nairobi, Kenya, where my dad was born. Staying at the National Geographic-designated ol Donyo Lodge in Chyulu Hills would allow me to have the full East African experience.

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU USED YOUR PASSPORT?

At the end of 2018, my mom, dad, brother, and I flew to India to see family & my parent's closest friends. It had been 11 years since my last trip to India, so it was a special trip for me. India is a place I could go back to every year- the people, culture, food, rich history, colors and more make it beautiful and so much fun. We rang in the New Year on the coast of Goa and it was unforgettable.

Another memory from that trip that I will not ever forget is when my dad took us to a hospital located close to where he grew up. My dad had a health concern with his eyes earlier that year and told us that when he recovers, he is going to donate to the eye hospital in India. This facility provides basic and specialized eye care to those who are unable to afford it. We were able to connect with the hospital administrator there and receive a full tour of the facility and services. It was fascinating for me to see how the Indian healthcare system operates compared to the American.

WHAT IS A FUN FACT ABOUT YOURSELF THAT NO ONE KNOWS?

I spend a few hours per week creating my own kind of "magic" on Canva! I love designing cards, invitations, signs, flyers, itineraries and more on that website. I never outwardly speak about my love for designing my own cardstock, but secretly would enjoy having a side Etsy gig. Maybe I will one day!

WHO IS YOUR HERO?

Hands down both my mom and dad. I feel so fortunate that I get to call those two incredible people my parents. As I've gotten older, my admiration, understanding, and appreciation for them continues to grow. My dad is an internist for small city in South Carolina, and my mom manages the practice. They have dedicated their lives to providing healthcare to a community of people, and they do it as a team. As everyone says, there is always time for one more patient with my dad. They never turn a person away. My parents embody what it means to be truly selfless, and want the absolute best for their kids, family, friends, and even strangers. They have taught me (mostly by leading by example) to advocate for those who are unable to advocate for themselves, do the right thing, show love to everyone, and to always be open to learning. I am so proud to be their daughter,

and thank my lucky stars that I have them!

WHAT WAS THE LAST BOOK YOU READ?

I recently revisited Harvard Business Review's 10 Must Reads on "Managing Yourself." It is a collection of best-selling articles & includes my personal favorite, "How Will You Measure Your Life?" by Clayton Christensen (one of my favorite authors). Although I am at the earlier stages of my career, I find it powerful to read Christensen's thoughts and reflections in regard to his own career and personal journey as well as takeaways from those of his colleagues. A few key learnings that may not be relevant to my life now may become relevant as I continue to progress throughout my career. I currently am mentoring graduate students along with new grads/early careerists, and I always like to share this article to discuss together. Christensen talks about establishing the purpose and strategy for your life to allow for clarity and happiness within your career and family/relationships. It also talks about how important the role of management is in the ability to build, develop and grow your team. As he mentions in the article, "the only metrics that will truly matter to my life are the individuals whom I have been able to help, one by one, to become better people."

WHAT WAS THE LAST MOVIE YOU SAW?

Interestingly enough, Sleepless in Seattle! My best friend and I were scrolling through Netflix trying to find a movie we have never seen. I do not think I've ever watched the whole thing through. Highly recommend this classic!

WHAT WAS THE LAST CONCERT YOU SAW?

Not sure if Oprah's 2020 Vision Tour at the Spectrum Center counts (it was just as entertaining as a concert!), but that was the best way to start of this year. It was all about focusing in on your mind, body & spirit, celebrating who you are, and setting the tone for the year! Regardless of all that has happened this year, which has truly been the most challenging of all, I still try my best to focus on my overall wellbeing and make sure to show love and reach out to everyone that I love and care for. In regard to a true music concert, it was Post Malone at the PNC Music Pavilion. He is incredible live, and I had an absolute blast (no regrets about it being on a work night!).