

Parent becomes patient advocate

In 2016, **Jamonica Hill** found herself in a position no mother ever wants to be in. Her 23-year-old daughter was diagnosed with an aggressive stage of breast cancer. This required treatment to begin immediately.

“A lot of information was being thrown at us at a fast pace,” said Hill. “When I wanted to discuss why they were suggesting certain treatments or medications and the pros and cons of each, I was met with some resistance. I needed to be able to explain to my family what was happening and why.”

Fortunately, the relationship with the care team got better over the next two years. And her daughter is now cancer-free.

This experience sparked a passion in health care and Hill decided to go back to school and earn her master’s degree in health administration. While in school, and still caring for her daughter, she became ill herself.

Hill was admitted to Duke University Hospital and diagnosed with sepsis and a kidney stone obstruction. This time Hill was fully satisfied with how the care team explained everything to her and her husband.

“After my experience with my daughter and during my own treatment, I wondered how other patients or family members navigate this process? What if they don’t understand all of the complex information being presented to them? How can I help?” she said.

In 2019, Hill found a way to help by joining the [Patient and Family Advisory Council](#) (PFAC) at Duke Raleigh Hospital (DRAH). This group of 10 former patients and family members offers input to improve the patient experience.

“The PFAC group is important because it is the voice of our patients and families,” said **Priscilla Ramseur**, DNP, RN, CNOR, NEA-BC, chief nursing and patient care services officer at DRAH who also serves as the executive liaison for the DRAH PFAC group. “The members help us provide outstanding patient care through learning from their perspective. It’s easy as clinicians to just see things medically and through a limited viewpoint.”

Among other projects, the group has helped improve patient education materials, the patient guide, patient menus and signage in the new pavilion. They offer suggestions to ensure what is provided to patients and families is clear.

The DRAH PFAC group has made such an impact that in 2020 the group was honored with a Health Care Hero award by the Triangle Business Journal.

“My daughter’s diagnosis led me to health care,” said Hill. “I want to help build a better experience for patients and their family members and this group is doing just that.”