

I AM YOUR REGISTERED NURSE

As I care for you, it is my job to protect you from all harm. That means any harm from your illness or its symptoms, from outside forces including the care environment, and from other people if necessary, even those involved with your health care or health financing.

As an autonomous health professional who reports only to senior nurses, it is my job to defend you from poor or misguided health care from any source.

I am your advocate. I vow to do my best to protect you as if you are a member of my family.



Angel



It is still common to see depictions of nurses as spiritually pure beings.

But the image of nurses as virtuous hand-holders and pillow-fluffers suggests that they don't need education or resources — and that nurses' main aspiration should be to do their work without getting much rest, money, or respect for what they think about patient care.

In fact, nurses are not angels. They are college-educated science professionals of all genders who use their advanced skills and courage to save lives. A few examples:

Nurses must detect subtle changes in patient conditions and take bold steps in response, like when a patient's heart stops and nurses defibrillate to start it again.

Nurses must advocate strongly to protect patients from life-threatening errors or misguided care plans, even if it means taking on physicians, police officers, insurance companies, bureaucrats, or hospital management.

Nurses must use their psychosocial skills, education and toughness to provide effective care to patients who are violent, intoxicated, or having psychotic symptoms.

Real nursing is challenging — because it is intellectually, emotionally, and physically demanding.

But poor public understanding of nursing, fueled by stereotypes like the angel, contributes to a lack of resources for nursing education, clinical practice, and research.

That can mean worse patient outcomes — including death.

Our future depends on nurses. Nurses depend on us to understand their true value.

A message from nurses everywhere.

BATTLE AXE

Hollywood still depicts senior nurses as frustrated females, tormenting patients and mercilessly enforcing trivial rules. But what happens in real life?

Far from trying to cause harm, nurses work hard to advocate *for* their patients, protecting them from life-threatening errors or misguided care plans — some even risking their careers to blow the whistle on harmful care.

Nurses are not “angels,” but they are modern health professionals of all genders who use advanced psychosocial skills and compassion to help patients recover and thrive.

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HOORAY FOR HOLLYWOOD



Popular television shows like *Grey's Anatomy* and *The Night Shift* often portray nurses as low-skilled assistants who simply carry out physician commands without evaluating them.

In reality, nurses are autonomous, college-educated health professionals. Of course they work *with* physicians, but they do not work *for* them. Nurses have their own unique scope of practice and they report to nurse managers, not physicians.

In fact, one key way nurses save lives is by catching errors in physician care plans. That is vital, since health care errors are the third leading cause of death in the U.S.!

And unlike most Hollywood nurses, real nurses take many other autonomous actions that save lives:

Nurses diagnose patients' wide-complex tachycardia, call a code, and defibrillate.

Emergency department nurses triage patients based on their own expert evaluation of who needs care first.

Nurses detect subtle symptoms of life-threatening infections and then intervene with high-tech treatments to prevent sepsis, shock and death.

Unfortunately, poor public understanding of nursing, fueled by media stereotypes, contributes to a lack of resources for nursing education, clinical practice, and research.

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COULD MONKEYS Be NURSES?

Uh, no.

Hollywood shows often suggest nurses are qualified only to fetch objects and obey simple commands. One soap opera even had a monkey play a nurse character!

In fact, nurses are autonomous, college-educated health professionals who save lives through skilled monitoring and treatments, strong advocacy, patient education, and catching errors.

Unlike monkeys, nurses detect subtle symptoms of impending health crises through high-tech monitoring and their own advanced assessment skills — especially when equipment is malfunctioning.

Unlike monkeys, nurses calculate a patient's dopamine IV drip by micrograms per kilogram per minute and titrate it constantly, keeping blood pressure from sky-rocketing — blowing out blood vessels in the brain — or dropping quickly, which would threaten or take the patient's life.

And unlike monkeys, flight nurses transport critically ill patients to trauma centers while keeping them alive with CPR, medications, and resuscitation equipment, despite the roar and turbulence of flight.

Poor public understanding of nursing, fueled by stereotypes like that of the unskilled nurse, contributes to a lack of resources for nursing education, clinical practice, research and residencies.

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Naughty

Today, images of nurses as mindless female sex objects still appear in advertising, television shows, music videos, and Halloween costumes.

Who cares? You should.

Individual nurses certainly don't object to being perceived as sexy. It suggests that they embody the same principles of exercise and healthy eating that they prescribe for patients.

But linking the nursing profession with female sexuality suggests that the work includes providing sexual services to patients and/or physicians. Of course, these images are "jokes" and fantasies. However, research shows that even such jokes affect how people think.

This stereotype discourages practicing and potential nurses, encourages sexual abuse in the workplace, and undermines nurses' claims to adequate resources for education, research, and clinical practice, all at a time of a global shortage.

This puts your life at risk. Unlike naughty nurses, real nurses save lives through skilled monitoring, high-tech treatments, strong advocacy, and patient education. Real nurses defibrillate your heart when it stops. But understaffing is a critical problem. With the resources that would come with more respect, nurses would more often be able to detect changes and intervene before you even needed defibrillation.

So please reconsider the naughty nurse.

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NOT WHAT THE MEDIA SAYS I AM



Popular TV shows like *Grey's Anatomy*, *The Night Shift*, and *The Mindy Project* portray nurses as low-skilled physician helpers. Meanwhile, physician characters spend much of their time doing work done by nurses in real life.

Real nursing is exciting. Nurses are autonomous, college-educated health professionals. They save lives through skilled monitoring, high-tech treatments, strong advocacy, and patient education. A few examples:

Nurses found and run new health systems for underserved communities, providing care to patients confronting obesity, prenatal difficulties, violence, and substance abuse.

Emergency department nurses triage patients based on their own expert evaluation of who needs care first.

Nurses coordinate the care provided by other health professionals, including physicians, social workers, and physical therapists.

Poor public understanding of nursing, fueled by media stereotypes, contributes to a lack of resources for nursing education, clinical practice, and research.

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