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Dear Ms. Johnson,

I am writing to explore working together in the wake of the media that has developed since your monologue at the September 2015 Miss America contest. I actually tried to write to you earlier, during the week of the controversy following the comments about the monologue on *The View*, but my message may not have gotten through.

I would love to see if we can pivot from the “just a nurse” concept that you used in your monologue to a larger effort to educate the public about the true value of nursing.

I understand that your goal with the Miss America monologue was to upend the “just a nurse” concept that has plagued the nursing profession. Perhaps there was a time limit on the monologue during the contest, but a couple of key ideas presented in it were never refuted, and I think it’s important to correct any misimpression the public may have gotten on those points.

Your monologue presented the idea that people who are “just [nurses]” have no input on their patient’s medication or treatment plans, but you may not have had time to come back around to refute that point. So I fear that the public has been left with the misconception that nurses can’t or don’t have a right to challenge physician prescriptions. I think there is still an opportunity for us to teach the public about our legal, professional, and ethical obligations to negotiate with physicians for a better plan of care for our patients if the current plan isn’t optimal, beneficial, or what the patient wants.

You did counter the “just a nurse” concept with the idea that your patient told you that you had value because you provided comfort and emotional support. Those are crucial qualities in nursing, but those things can also be done by a nice layperson without any particular skills. And the public

## THE TRUTH ABOUT NURSING

is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that seeks to increase public understanding of the central, front-line role nurses play in modern health care. Our focus is to promote more accurate, balanced and frequent media portrayals of nurses and increase the media’s use of nurses as expert sources. The Truth About Nursing’s ultimate goal is to foster growth in the size and diversity of the nursing profession at a time of critical shortage, strengthen nursing practice, teaching and research, and improve the health care system.

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already has a general sense that we are nice people who mop brows, fluff pillows, and hold hands in time of distress.

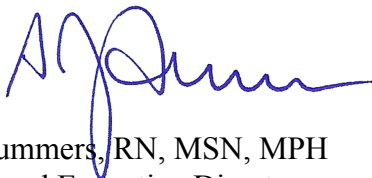
That understanding of who we are and what we do is not enough. In fact, I am afraid that image is a key factor in the weakened place nurses now occupy. That is a place in which insurance companies won't independently reimburse us because they undervalue us, people regularly abuse and disrespect us (leading us to say things about ourselves such as "I am just a nurse"), and hospitals feel free to understaff us, which [research](#) shows causes patients to die and suffer complications. Nursing practice, education, research and residencies are [grossly underfunded](#) precisely because we are undervalued.

We must send the public messages that we are science professionals, patient educators and advocates who detect and avert deadly complications—vital work that saves lives. I was glad you mentioned life-saving at the end of your monologue, but felt the public might have imagined you were overstating your case or qualifications because none of the preceding monologue mentioned any specific action or quality that would have led to a life being saved. I fear that the public was left with the message that nurses are nice people who will console them as physicians do as they wish, even if their care plans are misguided. Nurses can and should work for better health care at all levels, from the bedside to the boardroom; nurses have both the education and the professional duty to do so. Let's send a more empowered message of nursing to the public!

So...I would love to work together. As one suggestion, we could write an op-ed together to try to correct some of the damaging misconceptions that remain floating about out there. [We've gotten a few published](#). I would also love to send you a copy of our book [Saving Lives: Why the Media's Portrayal of Nursing Puts Us All at Risk](#), which focuses in improving public understanding of nursing and helping nurses work more effectively with the media. If you send me your mailing address I could send one along.

I look forward to hearing from you!

Best regards,



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Founder and Executive Director  
The Truth About Nursing

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