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Saving Lives – Why the Media’s Portrayal of Nursing Puts Us All at Risk

January 3rd 2015

Reviewed by Jim Young

Sandy Summers and Harry Jacobs Summers

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The forensic erudition of this book by Summers and Summers exposes the fossilised misrepresentation of nurses and the nursing profession as perpetuated by the media via a matrix of misconception.

Extensively referenced the book is a thought-provoking dissection of the depiction of nurses and nursing in the entertainment industry and media. It forces into our consciousness a topic that most of us would not have at forefront of our minds. But, as the book expounds, such stereotyped images ultimately effect recruitment, retention and practice. It reminds us that the consumers of these caricatures will someday be in need of the nursing care that is so acerbically and detrimentally sculptured by the insidious effects of exposure to such Machiavellian propaganda.

In particular it is the dichotomy in nurse / physician professional autonomy that is fundamentally misunderstood and misrepresented in all the scenarios described. This is of critical importance when one considers how powerful the media is for health promotion and for the understanding of the role of nurses.

Extensively filled with examples from television and the print media it leaves one exasperated and exhausted by the negative stereotypes that depict nurses and the nursing profession, where physicians dominate and where the description of nursing as an autonomous profession is considered a misnomer.

Although the film and television shows that are dissected are predominately American there is reference to some series from the UK where the lessons drawn are equally valid.

The book ends with suggestions as to what interested parties and other professional congregations can do to redress the imbalance in portraying what nurses are and do. The detailed explanations of what nurses can, and must do themselves to more realistically inform their own image will ensure that the book assumes a unique place in the chronology of the evolution of nursing practice in 21st century.

Jim Young

January 2015



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