

SALUTE to Nurses

Origins of Nursing

In order to fully appreciate nurses and understand everything they do, it is important to understand where they come from and how far they've come as professionals.

It hasn't always been an easy road for nurses, but through perseverance and an endless commitment to patient care, nurses have carved out a vital niche in the world of health care.

NURSING AS A PROFESSION

Nursing became a profession through the diligence of Florence Nightingale — a British citizen who first found her passion for caring for sick people in her town as a child.

In 1854, Nightingale organized a team of nurses to care for the soldiers in the Crimean War, where procedures such as detailed sanitation and vital checks became standard nursing practice. During her time in the war, the hospital's death rate decreased by two-thirds.

FORMAL NURSING EDUCATION

Following the Crimean war, nursing education formalized and expanded. Nightingale



founded the Nightingale Training School for Nurses, and in the next decade prestigious nursing education programs popped up in New York, Boston and Connecticut.

In the 1890s, two nursing organizations formed: the National League of Nursing Education and the American Nurses Association — both of which continue to advocate and assist in nursing educa-

tion today.

THE WORLD WARS

World War One created one of the largest needs for nurses in history. Nurses served both in hospitals and on the front lines aiding fallen soldiers. It was during the war that nurses began to develop specialized skills, which transformed the organization of health care after the war.

The aftermath of World War Two presented new challenges; while nursing was heralded as brave and necessary work, it was work that often garnered a low wage, demanding hours and poor working conditions, thus fewer young women were considering the profession.

Historically, the nursing profession has adapted and changed to suit the needs of

health care. Nursing is responsible for incredible medical advancements that we continue to enjoy today. It is a profession that continues to be respected and in high demand.

Through a variety of disciplines and credentialing opportunities, it also is one of the most stable employment opportunities for future workers.

What Nurses Really Do

Nurses play critical roles in hospitals, rehabilitation centers and various other care facilities. The template of the caring, compassionate nurse from years gone by — the stereotype that still exists today — at times overshadows all of a nurse’s real responsibilities.

This is not to say care and compassion aren’t key traits that successful nurses have and employ, but they are much more than “nurse maids.”

Here are some of the most pressing roles of a nursing professional:

- Nurses in emergency departments are often tasked with triaging patients based on their own expert assessment.
- Nurses require state and federal certification or licensing, and many hold advanced degrees from notorious programs.
- Nurses are responsible for coordinating patient care with physicians, physical therapists and social workers, among others.
- Nurses found and run health care systems for underserved communities, providing care to patients struggling with substance abuse, various forms of violence and prenatal care.
- Nurses can be doctors. Nurses can earn a doctor of philosophy (PhD) or a doctorate in nursing practice (DNP).
- Nurses must earn continuing education hours every year to stay informed of current and new trends and technologies in the field. Medicine is constantly evolving, and it is imperative for nurses to



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keep up.

• In fact, according to a 2001 World Health Organization report, nurses and midwives

make up between 50 percent and 90 percent of the number of health practitioners in numerous countries.

• Nurses forge new ground in health care, having been responsible for founding the Red Cross and Planned

Parenthood, as well as the development of mental institutions and the Nurse Army Corps.

Changes and Challenges

The role of nurses in our current health care system is a widely discussed topic. Nurses have never been relied upon more to pick up additional knowledge and professional qualifications, produce their own research and coordinate care for their patients.

With the U.S. population aging, the demand for qualified nurses has increased dramatically.

PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

Continuing education is a major part of the nursing profession. Nurses must become licensed and have a variety of degree programs through which to further their professional qualifications.

In fact, many schools have implemented “bridge programs,” which allow students to earn two degrees at once (either a BSN and MSN, or an MSN and DPN) or are designed in such a way for students to continue their education from undergraduate to graduate work without interruption. This makes it easy for nurses to advance their education.

RESEARCH

Not only must nurses earn continuing education credits to maintain their accreditation, but they also can earn professional certifications to specialize in a certain area of nursing.

They are encouraged to produce their own research for medical journals and contribute to advancements in the field of medicine.

CARE COORDINATION

With the endless stream of specializations and advancements in health care, it is common for a patient to have more than one doctor or need more than one service from a variety of providers.

Providing diverse services is a vital and yet often overlooked duty of the nursing profession. While care coordination is a part of any nursing job, many facilities are hiring nurses to fill this role exclusively as the needs of the population increase.





Celebrate Nurses Week

National Nurses Week is held from May 6-12 every year to honor the hard work that nurses do to make a difference in the lives of their patients every day. Work with your fellow nurses and employer to plan a week of events for everyone to enjoy.

If you don't work in the medical field but want to show your gratitude, contact your local hospital or clinic and see how you can be helpful in planning a celebration. Care facilities are not known for turning down volunteers.

PLAN A BREAKFAST

Everyone loves a good breakfast. The beauty of this type of

celebration is that it can take many forms. Plan a sit-down breakfast at the beginning of a rotation and invite other staff to come show their support and appreciation.

Give out awards or recognize nurses for specific accomplishments and occurrences where they went above and beyond their responsibilities. You also can plan a more informal gath-

ering where pastries, fresh fruit and sandwiches are available all day, allowing each shift rotation to participate in the special event.

HOST A FUNDRAISER

Events such as walk-a-thons or 5K races are great ways to both promote a healthy lifestyle and celebrate nurses. At the start and finish of the

event, take the time to emphasize the importance of nursing and the work that nurses perform.

Donate the proceeds to a local charity selected by the nurses, or to a local health care facility that could use the extra funds.

SPREAD THE WORD

Don't forget the local paper

or newsletter. Let your local media outlets know that it is National Nurses Week and ask them to report on the value of nurses to the community.

You also could submit a letter to the editor honoring nurses and the work they do, or call an editor and pitch a feature story on an amazing local nurse. Media outlets are always looking for story ideas.

Honoring Home Health Nurses

Don't forget to honor your home health nurse during national nurses week — or at any other point in the year.

Home health nurses often don't get recognized for their efforts (even though the families they work with are most likely incredibly appreciative) simply because they work outside of a structured organization, such as a hospital or clinic.

Take some time and honor a home health nurse you know. Here are just a few ways to show your appreciation.

GIVE A GIFT

Gifts don't need to be expensive to be thoughtful. Consider writing a heartfelt note and pair it with flowers from your backyard arranged in a vase or tied with a piece of ribbon.

HOST A DINNER

Invite your nurse to stay for dinner and invite other family members. You could each take turns toasting your nurse, telling them how much you appreciate them and anything they do that you find especially comforting.

You also could purchase a gift card to a local restaurant or prepare a special meal yourself to be taken home, allowing your nurse to share your gift with family.

This also could be in the



form of a simple pie for dessert. It is a thoughtful gesture to think of your nurse's family when he so diligently looks after yours.

PASS ON YOUR COMPLIMENTS

While hopefully you remember to share praise often, take a moment to contact your

home health nurse's supervisor (if she works with a service) and express thanks for the great job your nurse is doing. Tell the supervisor what

your nurse does to make a difference for your family. The supervisor is likely to take note, and your nurse is apt to hear your good words.

The Cap and Cape

In the late 19th century, as nursing was founded and respected as a worthy and necessary profession, all nurses wore caps to cover their hair for sanitation.

The caps were designed so that a nurse could pull her hair back completely and secure it in a bun that would be covered by the cap. They were, in fact modeled after a nun's habit in order to keep hair neatly in place.

In the early 20th century, caps changed in style to a smaller, starched-white cap that instead of covering the hair, rested on top of the nurse's head. This modern style was also accompanied by another new piece to the nursing uniform: the cape. By this time, most nursing schools had their own distinct design, which ended up signifying where a nurse had received her training.

This was the beginning of the cap becoming more symbolic than practical. It became a fashion piece that represented the compassionate nature and trustworthiness of the nursing profession.

FAMOUS PIECE OF TRADITION

The most famous nursing cap was perhaps the cap worn by the graduates of the Bellevue School of Nursing in New York.

According to the National Library of Medicine, the cap, which resembled a white cupcake liner or coffee filter turned upside down with its sharp pleating and round shape, was known as the "Bellevue Fluff."

CAPPING

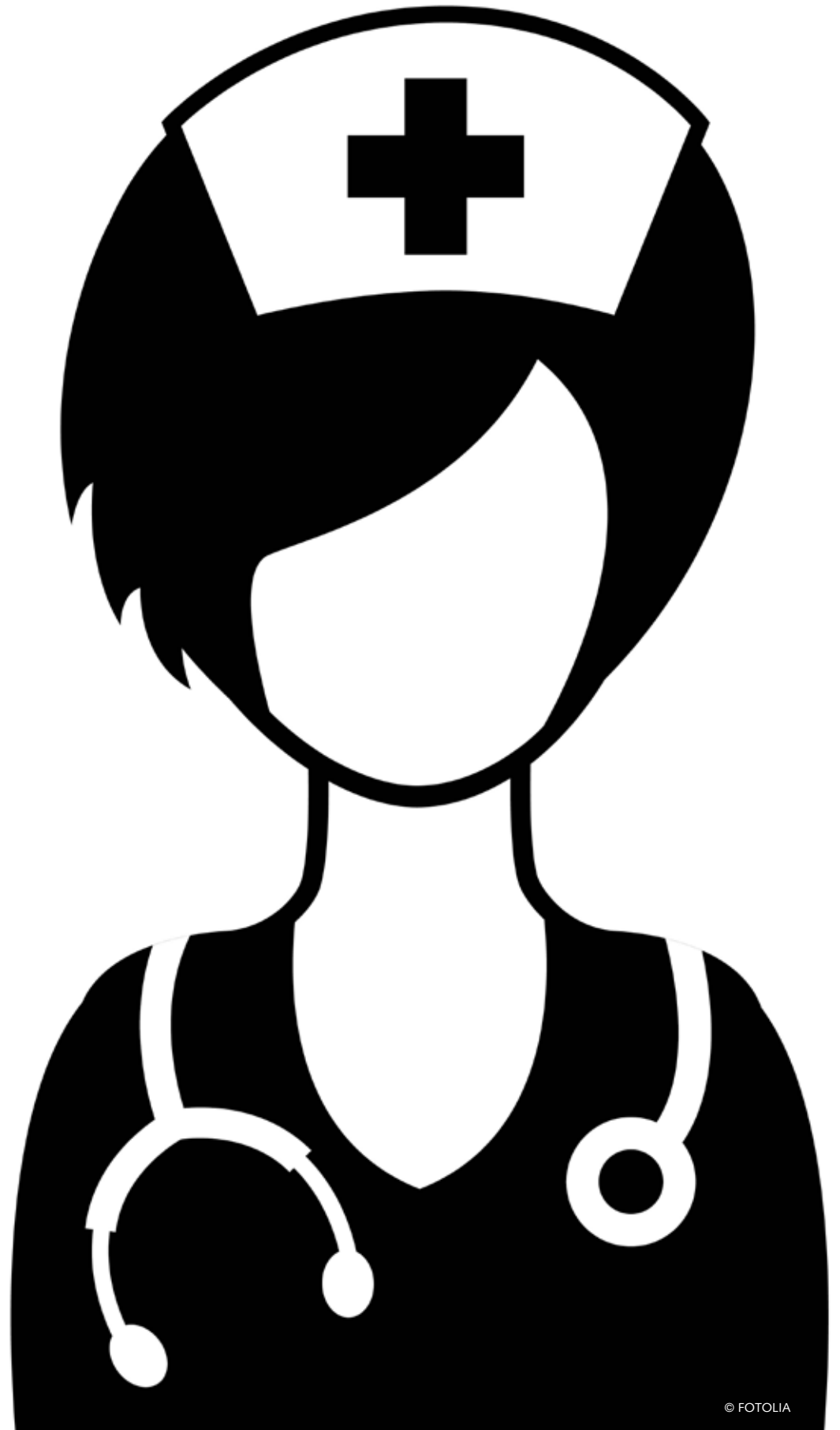
The cap also signified a nurse's knowledge. In fact, "capping" became an important ceremony in nursing schools performed in front of family and friends. A nursing student would receive her school's cap either after a designated period, such as completing the first year of training, or at graduation.

The nursing cap also became the article through which rank could be distinguished. Many schools followed military traditions and chose to classify rank through stripes, or a sort of colored band; sporting a band on your cap identified a nurse as a senior in her program.

CUTTING THE CAP

Eventually, the nursing cap came to be seen as impeding on patient care. In the 1980s, with the introduction of "scrubs" in the medical profession and the desire for a unisex uniform, the cap all but disappeared.

There are still many developing and developed countries that employ the nurse's cap, including Japan and South Korea. Even though the tradition has faded within the day-to-day of the profession in the United States, the cap still holds significant symbolic value as a representation of service, trust and dignity.



Notable Nurses in History

The nursing profession has progressed in many ways over the years. Here are nine notable nurses who helped the position ascend to new levels of respect and leadership.

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE
1820 TO 1920

Nightingale is known as the founder of modern nursing. The legendary nurse lived to be 100 years old and introduced sanitation protocols in hospitals where the mortality rate was seven times higher than the battlefield. With Nightingale's efforts, mortality rates in hospitals reduced by more than half.

DORTHEA DIX
1802 TO 1887

While Dix was a fine nurse, it was her efforts in lobbying for the mentally ill that earn her place in nursing history. She fought with legislators and while she didn't begin to see an asylum take form until the end of her life, the benefits of her efforts still care for the mentally ill today.

CLARA BARTON
1821 TO 1912

Ever wonder how the American Red Cross all began? The answer is Barton. She also established the National First Aid Association of America.

MARY ELIZA MAHONEY
1845 TO 1926

Mahoney was the first African-American Registered Nurse. She worked as a cook, laundress and janitor for 15 years before finally being admitted into the nursing program at New England Hospital.

ANNA CAROLINE MAXWELL
1851 TO 1929

The founder of the Army Nurse Corps, Maxwell began her training at Boston City Hospital. After the Spanish-American War, Congress recognized the value of nurses in the military, which was influenced greatly by her efforts and created the Army Nurse Corps.

MARGARET SANGER
1879 TO 1966

Founder of Planned Parenthood, Sanger wrote about education and women's health, aspiring to spread a message focused on women's rights.

MABEL KEATON STAUPERS
1890 TO 1989

Instrumental in ending racial prejudice in nursing, Staupers and is marked as responsible for fully integrating black nurses into the nursing profession.

VIRGINIA AVENEL HENDERSON
1897 TO 1996

Probably one of the most notable nurses of the 20th century, Henderson developed and established Modern Nursing Theory and clearly defined nursing roles in primary health care.

HAZEL JOHNSON-BROWN
1927-2011

Johnson-Brown is noted for being both the first black general in the United States Army and the first black Chief of Army Nurse Corps.

