Mentoring inspires next generation of leaders

Robin had Batman. Watson had Holmes. But who can the next generation of nurses look up to? For most nurses, the answer is right in front of their eyes: their managers, co-workers and friends.

"Whether it occurs formally in a classroom or seminar or informally over a cup of coffee, mentoring enriches both the senior staff and the junior health care novice. Mentoring builds bridges, improves communication, unleashes creativity, reduces frustration, and enhances patient care and caregiver career opportunities. "There are enough role models out there, but I don't think people see how important it is," said Cindy Balkstra, RN, C, MS, a pulmonary clinical nurse specialist at St. Joseph/Candler Health System in Savannah, Ga. Balkstra believes nurses need to rely on each other for their personal and professional development.

To expand her professional and leadership skills, Balkstra participated in the Honor Society of Nursing. Sigma Theta Tau International's mentorship program, the Chiron Mentor-Fellow Forum, in 2001. (See sidebar story.) Working with her mentor, Dr. Marianne Matzo, Balkstra developed end-of-life directives for pulmonary patients.

"Mentoring is something that should happen every day, not just inside formal mentorship programs such as Chiron, Balkstra said. "Nurses need to realize, once you get to a certain point in your career, it's part of your role to look back and see who else you can grow."

Balkstra has several mentors, both in and outside of nursing. "They help me be more specific, and they help me when my creativity is a little low," she said.

"Mentoring is about giving, as well as taking. You should look behind to see who needs help to grow, as well as look ahead to see what opportunities are there for you," Balkstra said. Kathleen Sanford, RN, DBA, FACHE,

By Susan Moore

Sharing bad news about a diagnosis, prognosis or condition with a patient or family member has traditionally been delegated to physicians. Recent shifts to multidisciplinary care teams and the increasing presence of nurse practitioners in primary and tertiary settings have altered the playing field. Increasingly, nurses at all practice levels are involved in giving and sharing bad news in a variety of health care settings. As part of informed consent for procedures, we are required, as caregivers, to inform patients of all aspects of their condition and likely outcomes, and patients expect to be told the truth. As part of any patient relationship, truth-telling is essential in order to maintain trust. In some specialties, such as oncology, sharing bad news often becomes an everyday issue, but nurses practicing in prevention-focused, primary-care practices may find themselves facing an unfamiliar task: how to effectively share bad news.

In the area of pain management, we have long been told to acknowledge the patient's perception of pain—that pain exists based on the patient's description, not on the clinician's observation. The same ground rule applies to bad news. The perception of bad news is based entirely on the recipient of the news, not the perception of the newsgiver. Sharing biopsy results that reveal an incurable cancer leaves little doubt on either side that this is grim news. Nurses routinely see patients with chronic conditions such as diabetes mellitus or hypertension. We may consider these conditions as manageable, chronic conditions, but to a patient newly diagnosed, the perception of lost health and the need for lifelong medication...
Johnson & Johnson launches campaign to reduce nursing shortage

Johnson & Johnson has launched a $20 million multi-year campaign to attract more people to work in hospitals and extended care facilities.

The campaign was developed with the input of national nursing organizations, including the Honor Society of Nursing, and complements the existing Nurses at a Healthcare Tomorrow campaign, in which the society also is involved.

"Throughout Johnson & Johnson's history as a major provider of products and services to hospitals, nurses, nursing school recruiters, nursing organizations and others across the country, the tools include a new nursing career video, brochure and posters promoting nursing careers.

The company enlisted an advisory group of nursing leaders to help develop the campaign and help direct its future efforts. The members of the advisory panel are Society President May L. Wykle, RN, PhD, FAAN, and Society Chief Executive Officer Nancy Dickens-Hazard, RN, MSN, FAAN.

Johnson & Johnson launched the campaign on February 5 with a reception at Union Station in Washington, D.C. Attendees included health care industry executives, nursing association leaders, nursing school deans and health care policy makers. Highlights from the event included speeches by U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson, U.S. Rep. James Wykle and U.S. Senator Tim Huitchinson.

On February 6, Johnson & Johnson hosted a press conference in New York to announce the campaign to the media. Wykle was a featured speaker at the press conference. Immediately following the press conference, Wykle and Dickens-Hazard participated in a satellite media tour to promote "The Campaign for Nursing's Future."

They were interviewed by television stations across the country.

"This is something that many of us care a lot about, and it was great to be chosen as one of the people to share the launch with the media," Dickens-Hazard said. "As nurses, we all have a responsibility to take an active part in ensuring there are enough of us to provide adequate care for patients nationwide."

Johnson & Johnson, with approximately 101,800 employees, is the world's most comprehensive and broadly based manufacturer of health care products and pharmaceuticals. The company provide services for the consumer, pharmaceutical and professional markets. Johnson & Johnson has more than 190 operating companies in 51 countries around the world, selling products in more than 175 countries.
An act of compassion

Medical and nursing schools are increasingly including techniques such as delivering bad news into the curriculum. Physicians and nurses who completed their education without benefit of coaching in this important area can increase their comfort and skill level by: (1) observing colleagues who they feel are able to deliver bad news with empathy and without undue stress; (2) reading the literature to assess other methods and suggestions; and (3) continuing to practice and assess their own ability as the need arises. Breaking bad news requires the communication of difficult and potentially life-changing information and empowerment to a patient or family in need.

References

171, 260-263.

Peter Buerhaus, associate dean of nursing at Vanderbilt, Honor Society of Nursing board member and a leading researcher on the nursing shortage.

The study shows that:

- 81 percent of Americans recognize that there is a nursing shortage and 65 percent believe the shortage is either a major problem or a crisis.
- 93 percent agree (80 percent strongly agree) that the nursing shortage jeopardizes the quality of health care in the United States. Seniors, aged 55 and older, are particularly sensitive to the shortages, saying they are concerned about the quality of the health care system.
- 75 percent are concerned that the nursing shortage could impact the individual health care, and 65 percent of younger Americans (aged 18 to 34) experience anxiety over the shortage.
- Other key findings of the survey include:
  - 95 percent of Americans find nurses' opinions on health matters to be credible and overwhelmingly trust, respect and admire nurses.
  - 97 percent view nurses and the nursing profession favorably (76 percent very favorably).
  - Commissioned nurses play a critical role in the health care system.
  - Although 83 percent of Americans, including 78 percent of men, would encourage a loved one to enter the nursing profession, only 21 percent would consider nursing as a career for themselves.
  - Only one male in 10 would consider nursing as a career.
  - Ninety-one percent said they would view it positively (74 percent very positively) if a family member or close friend were considering it.

The care that nurses offer patients is the main reason Americans have considered a career in nursing. Thirty-four percent of those who have considered nursing as a career say the primary reason is because nurses care about people and want to help others.

Most Americans are unaware that nursing offers career opportunities outside patient care-such as research or health management. Many Americans have only a cursory knowledge of the differences among types of nursing professionals, such as licensed practical nurses, registered nurses and nurse practitioners. In addition, Americans much more strongly associate nurses with engaging in activities providing care, such as critical end-of-life care (74 percent), than they do with functions such as working in laboratories (35 percent), conducting research (32 percent), and writing and revising hospital and clinic policies (30 percent).

Most Americans have little or no idea about how much money nurses earn, and there is little recognition that nursing salaries are competitive with those of other professions.

According to the researchers, interest in nursing will likely increase significantly once the American public is made aware of the opportunities the profession offers. Already 21 percent say that they have at least once considered a career in nursing.

"The biggest problem is that people are unaware of the array of opportunities and rewards in nursing today," Buerhaus said. "They are unaware that nursing salaries are very competitive with other professions or that nursing offers career opportunities in health research, hospital management, and family and community health care, in addition to traditional patient care. We need to get these messages out to parents, teachers, counselors and, above all, students at all levels."

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Celebrate diversity

A call to action for Nurses Week

By May L. Wykle

Imagine a world where everyone and everything is the same. We'd all work the same job, have the same beliefs, experience the same things and look the same. How boring it would be! Fortunately, ours is a diverse world—a mosaic of colors, traditions, values and talents. Each of us brings uniqueness to every relationship and situation.

The nursing profession offers a wide range of opportunities to engage and interact with other professionals who have rich backgrounds and who represent a complex landscape of cultural mores, health care organizations and people. Nurses are the very thread that actively stitch and hold this patchwork of diversity together. Through this process, lives are changed, careers are engaged and interactive with other everyone and everything is the same. We'd all live well together. Through this process, lives are changed, careers are made, the sick are healed and health is promoted.

It's so easy to take all of this for granted, but I suggest that as Nurses Week approaches (May 6-12) we all take time to reflect on how fortunate we are to be part of a cadre of diverse professionals who are committed to improving the health and welfare of individuals worldwide.

Florence Nightingale, the founder of modern nursing, provides testimony to nursing's mission of service to humanity and the power of diversity. She pioneered the art and science of nursing and influenced public healthcare. She made significant contributions to the health care system and hospital reform. She spearheaded the use of social statistics and their graphical representation and used statistics to demonstrate how death rates decreased when the spread of infection across populations was controlled through proper sanitation. Her leadership and knowledge helped lead to the establishment of the Red Cross in Geneva in 1864, and many of her recommendations were incorporated into the basic guiding principles of this international organization.

She didn't do all this alone, of course. Nightingale collaborated with individuals and organizations to achieve her vision. Oustandingly, her power and ability to affect change came through inclusion of diverse opinions, approaches and needs, while keeping to us of her contributions and the responsibility we have as nurses to do everything we can to advance our profession for the benefit of those in our care. We strive to find ways to employ our uniqueness in support of this common goal. We embrace diversity and reach out to our colleagues at other health care organizations and to those with differing backgrounds and perspectives. Doing this will enrich the experience for all and will ultimately give rise to a more richly diverse nursing profession.

So celebrate nursing's diversity. Plan activities during Nurses Week that foster collaboration and instill pride. At the Honor Society of Nursing, we will pay tribute to the sacrifices nurses and other health care professionals made on and after the September 11 attacks by dedicating a special garden and park bench on our headquarters property in Indianapolis. This garden will flourish as a reminder of how the health care community can indeed rally together to overcome a common cause, tragic or otherwise, to serve the greater good.

Of course there are many other ways to celebrate Nurses Week. For example, coordinate a non-health-care-related community service project that involves nurses with an opportunity to strengthen relationships with their colleagues in a different environment. Dust off your society pin and wear it proudly or write a personal note to a nurse who has made a significant contribution to your career.

Whatever you decide, use Nurses Week as a platform for reflection and growth. Make Nurses Week meaningful and memorable, and above all take the opportunity to soak in the richness of this noble profession and the diverse perspectives it shares.

May L. Wykle, RN, PhD, FAAN, is president of the Honor Society of Nursing, Sigma Theta Tau International and dean and Florence Cellar Professor of Gerontological Nursing at the Frances Payne Bolton School of Nursing, Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio.