

The effects of media in nursing evolution assignment



Running Head: THE EFFECT OF MEDIA The Effect of Media in the Nursing Evolution The Effect of Media in Nursing Evolution The media has played a huge role in the evolution of nursing. Its influence has been both positive and negative. I have chosen to research this subject because of the negative results and feedback that I will provide throughout this paper. This negative influence is directly affecting the number of people that are deciding to pursue nursing as a career.

In a study of students in grades 1 through 10, most of them describe nursing as a technical job with no career advancement. The students stated, " it was a girl's job", and were unsure of the job security as a result of an unsteady financial market in health care (Sherman, 2000. p. 4). Nursing Influence In World War II (WWII) the media portrayed nursing as one of the most respected and moral professions women could hold. These nurses were seen as angels tending to the wounded with kindness, compassion, and caring attitudes.

The portrayal of heroines of society continued through World War II (WWII), as is demonstrated in the movie *The Notebook* in which Rachel McAdam portrays a woman who drops out of college during WWI to help wounded soldiers (Cassavetes & Sparks, 2004). The media is a very powerful voice that reaches out to the entire world regarding the issues surrounding the nursing profession. Biased opinions are formulated while watching what the media has to show us.

Most people are familiar with Nurse Ratchet in the movie *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* as she glares at Jack Nicholson and warns him to take his pills

orally or she will find another way to dispense it (Forman et al. 1976).

Sitcoms currently on the air such as House, Scrubs, ER, and Private Practice are aired internationally. The picture they paint of nurses is poor. In House the nursing role is unrecognized and nonexistent, it focuses solely on the important role of the doctor.

According to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, " Nurses comprise the largest single component of hospital staff, are the primary providers of hospital patient care, and deliver most of the nation's long-term care" (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 2008). The prime time television show, Scrubs, portrays nurses as brainless physician helpmates. The physicians on this show expect nurses to follow orders without question. The nurses in turn accept these subservient roles without retaliation or question (Lawrence et al, 2008).

In reality, though, " Nursing is an autonomous profession built around patient advocacy. Many times nurses are in fact questioning physician decisions and saving the lives of those they care for" (Georgia Nursing Association, 2004).

The rock band Blink 182's latest compact disc cover has a buxom blond with red lips and matching Wonderbra in a nurse uniform. This erotically sexy image has plagued nurses in other media advertisements, such as Clairol Herbal Essence products and a commercial for milk in the 1980's which showed four sexy nurses drinking milk while stating " milk, it does a body good. Women are the not the only ones portrayed negatively in the public view. Male nurses have been pigeon holed as being gay. In the movie Meet the Parents, starring Ben Stiller, he announces to his fiance's parents that he

is a nurse and they immediately begin laughing and making remarks
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regarding his masculinity (Roach et al, 2000). These kinds of portrayals are demoralizing and demeaning to the nursing profession. The media also focuses on the negativity surrounding deaths in the hospital environment.

Bearns (2000) reports, The Chicago Tribune ran an article bearing the following headline: " Nursing Mistakes Kill, Injure Thousands Cost-Cutting Exacts Toll on Patients, Hospital Staffs. Series: Dangerous Care: Nurses' Hidden Role in Medical Error. First of Three Parts. " Following this headline read: Lax government oversight and a shoddy system of reporting medical errors allow negligent, incompetent and impaired registered nurses to return to work in Illinois even after committing deadly errors. In Chicago, registered nurses have injected themselves with heroin and cocaine, then committed dozens of errors.

They have stolen prescribed medications, then left patients to suffer in pain for hours (Bearns, 2000. p. 14). Initiatives are now being performed in the media to improve this negative image about nursing. In 2002, The Johnson & Johnson Company started a \$20 million campaign, Campaign for Nursing's Future, " to enhance the image of the nursing profession, recruit new nurses and educators, and to retain nurses currently in the system" (Chitty & Black, 2007, p50). The Center for Nursing Advocacy is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to increase the public's understanding of what nursing details.

They actively seek out media networks such as National Broadcasting Company(NBC), Columbia Broadcasting System(CBS), and American Broadcasting Company(ABC) and discourage roles that nurses play on shows

which are demeaning in character. Scripts for the show ER have been altered to show nurses in a role that correctly depicts what a nurse does on the front line. "The Center'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" (Center for Nursing Advocacy, 2008).

Final Thoughts The aforementioned complexity of the media illustrates the optimistic and pessimistic views of today's nursing. It is this writer's contention that the pendulum of weight in regards to journalism has acted like a dumbwaiter to plummet the perception of nursing to an all time low. Chitty and Black (2007) identify "The media's new weapon of electric fabrication (internet) as a powerful medium to hinder the very core of nursing" (p406). The media juggernaut that I have come accustomed to has me basking in the sunlight one moment or crashing on the rocks the next.

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