



SERVING CLINICAL NEEDS

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The word, nurse, means caring or to care. The accent is clearly on Care and thus, to care is the essence of nursing. As such, nursing means to care for all people in the community, but especially the vulnerable as they have problems to care for themselves. The nurse has the responsibility to promote health and prevent illness, but also to alleviate pain and suffering for those, at the end of life, when no healing is possible anymore.

Nurses are trained to treat in an autonomous and collaborative manner; this means that they act in accordance to their knowledge and expertise, but also as the extension of the Medical Practitioner's arm, in fulfilling the requests. Nurses are also advocates for those who are not able to speak for themselves and their patient's wellbeing must always be first priority.

The crises in nursing today, is that the essence of nursing is not the first priority anymore. The reason for this disappearance needs to be researched thoroughly but, more urgently, is that something drastically needs to be done, as people are dying and suffering due to the poor nursing care. The result is clear when looking at the amount of medical legal cases going to court, the amount of quanta calculated and, especially, the accounts from former patients during consultations.

This cannot be tolerated anymore, and I have been thinking about this for quite some time and have formulated plans which may be unconventional, but seeing that the situation is critical, some unconventionality is needed:

- Nurses should be made aware that they are rendering substandard nursing care. They should also be made aware that the substandard nursing care, has become public knowledge. Therefore, I propose a Nursing Awareness Campaign, by way of visual, verbal and public communication.
- All role players in the nursing field need to be incorporated:
 - Research is needed to establish the reason for the substandard nursing care.
 - Meetings should be held with the South African Nursing Council (SANC) regarding the training of nurses and disciplinary actions. The SANC has proposed a CPD (Continuing Professional Development) System and I have even attended such a meeting three years ago. Still no such system has been implemented and nursing is the only profession in the medical field where such a system is not mandatory

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for annual registration. A CPD System needs to be implemented as soon as possible as the delay in this, is unacceptable.

- Meetings must be held with the Nursing Unions and their role in representing their clients but also regarding the Union's responsibility to motivate and develop their clients for the better of the community.
- The disciplinary procedures against nursing personnel rendering substandard nursing care, needs to be investigated. For me, as a Medical Legal Nursing Consultant, it seems as if the specific people responsible for the death and suffering of their patients, come away unscathed time and time again. The hospitals or the Provincial and National Health Departments take the blame for individual actions while the culprits can carry on with horrendous behavior without being afraid that their actions will be punished.
- The part of the community suffering the most due to substandard care rendered and cases costing the Health Department millions, are the children growing up with Cerebral Palsy due to careless actions from Midwives during monitoring and recording the labour process. Through this the delivery of an otherwise normal healthy baby is jeopardised.

One way to lower the expenses, as well as assuring good care and rehabilitation of these children suffering from Cerebral Palsy, is through the establishment of Centers of Excellence. These children can be admitted for life at these centers and receive appropriate care and rehabilitation in order to develop according to their potential.

These Centers of Excellence should be managed and overseen by Case Managers who will co-ordinate all disciplines involved as well as being the coordinator between all caring for the child, the family and the Court. A Registered Nurse is the ideal person to fulfill this role.

Nursing is one of the essential professions within a community and it is indeed a sad day when this vital profession cannot live up to its responsibility and take accountability for its own problems. The current crises in the nursing profession must not be ignored and needs to be addressed actively, practically and drastically in order to prevent a complete collapse of the health system.

I as a Registered Nurse needs to be proud of my profession. I should promote it and ensure the community that being admitted in a hospital is like going to a safe haven. Unfortunately, this is not the case currently and I am willing, and have the passion, to be involved in changing this sore state of affairs

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