



What Student Nurses Have To Go Through During Their Training



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My dear readers,

It is time again for nursing thoughts from the island. Before I begin, I hope you all had a great start to 2023. May this year be in some way kinder to nurses, midwives, doctors, and healthcare professionals. But we shall see....

This month, I want to share my thoughts with you about my experiences, which I gathered with 'my' student nurses. Currently, I teach 'English for Nurses' at two nursing schools. My students have to write a reflection paper on their training during the course. This exercise allows the students to reflect on a situation that might have been either challenging for them or beautiful. This task, which they have to fulfil, is in English. To write in English is a task in itself, but to reflect on nursing action in English is at an even higher level.

Most of the students write great reports, and I truly enjoy their work, which is done professionally. When I read the reports and mark them, I cannot deny that some narratives are heartbreaking. Those words of some students make me think and worry – yes, in some ways, to death, about what staff nurses are doing to the next generation of young nurses. Some (a lot?) of staff nurses are stuck in time. They have missed the train of changes of what is going on in their own professional culture. They show the student nurses how we worked 30 years (plus) ago.

When I read those sentences from the students, I am almost gobsmacked. Have we – staff nurses with tons of experience – learned nothing in the last years of nursing? Why are we so harsh with the students? Why do the students have to feel the mad pressure of ward work? Many cannot stand this madness of work and hide during their shift in toilets and cry. When I read those words, believe me, my heart pumps rapidly, and I am quite tachycardic. I feel angry about my colleagues that they can be old-school matrons who worked 70 years ago – and it seems that the matron's spirit is still around. Why, I ask those staff nurses, why are you so crass with the students?

As a language teacher, it is also my task for the student nurse cohort to be their mentor. I ask them how the ward work is going, how they feel etc. I invite them to open mic sessions, where the students can speak openly about their thoughts and worries and the beauty of nursing, WHICH DOES EXIST!

Two papers in my last student cohort were written in-depth. These papers made me think of where we are, in some ways, with the next generation of student nurses. Please read for yourself what students of today think when they are on placements:

Yeva R and Matthias F are both student nurses in their third year. Yeva had to do what she was told by a staff nurse. Yeva did not feel great about it, as she knew it was wrong. She told the staff nurse her thoughts, but the staff nurse did not listen and continued with her wrongdoing, which was bad practice. The bad practice led to infections for the young patient, which was heartbreaking for the student nurse. But this bad experience, which Yeva, unfortunately, had to experience led her to a conclusion:

Yeva said, "I have learned from this situation that it is also important to represent your opinion and be accepted as a student nurse. This prevents unnecessary feelings of guilt and strengthens your self-confidence. You should always have a trusted person to not be alone in case of problems and to find a solution together. I am now in my third year of training and have acquired enough knowledge to trust my feeling when I don't think something is right or I notice something that others may not have noticed. I also think it is important to always find a compromise and to treat colleagues with sufficient respect".

Matthias F, a fellow student colleague of Yeva, wrote in his reflection work about the death situation during the COVID-19 waves: He wrote, "*For 12 days, I prepared a corpse/a body every day for disposal. I deliberately call it disposal because according to the disease control law at the time, all COVID-19 corpses were burned without exception, regardless of whether it was their wish or whether their religion allowed it at all. With the first deceased, a little compassion still fluctuated, but with each time, a certain relief arose. Taking care of one person less, yes. Twelve days, 12 dead. Had no chance to prevent that. Had no chance to let them go with dignity, and in the end, you were glad they were dead. A dead patient does not require so much work anymore*".

If you read those lines as staff nurses, you can picture it in your mind. These words are honest. They do not paint a picture of all happiness and glamour. They are written from the bottom of the students' hearts. The students who started their training in 2020 deserve special respect and honour. They show staff nurses that learning nursing during a pandemic will not hinder them from becoming great staff nurses.

None of us 'older' staff nurses have to deal with 12 deaths in 12 days, and none of us had to fulfil staffing numbers when we did our training many years ago. We were not running into toilets and crying because we could not stand the pressure of ward work.

What is going on, staff nurses? The next generation of student nurses already carries a huge burden. Therefore, treat them with respect, which they truly deserve. Be a professional role model for them and guide them! This is your DUTY, staff nurse!

Warm regards,

Sabine

Published on : Wed, 8 Feb 2023