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The Impact of Nursing on an Individual

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Scholarly Paper

Nursing is a profession that offers an amplitude of opportunities, and orbits around the notion of maintaining one's health, comforting the ones in need and providing care to those who are ill. Students may choose nursing for the opportunities, aspirations, family pressures, annual income, the demand for nurses in North America, and job stability. All these factors play a role in one's choice to enter the nursing profession. However, my reasoning happens to not be about income or retention rate after graduating, but how I can make a difference once completely engulfed in the profession.

Over the past century, the perception of nursing has shifted from a low-status career for the uneducated, poor or unmarried women (Potter, Perry, Ross-Kerr & Grypma 2014 p. 32) to a highly sought after reputable profession, which was initiated by Florence Nightingale in the nineteenth century. In a society where jobs were mainly offered to males, Nightingale took a stand for working women and challenged society's ideals by voicing her opinion. "Why have women passion, intellect, moral activity- these three- and a place in society where no one of the three can be exercised?" (Potter et. al, 2014 p. 32). Florence broke free from the customs and unapologetically set up a new standard for care which implemented the "principles of cleanliness and comfort" (Potter et. al, 2014 p.33). Due to her work in the Crimean war, she set a new standard for nursing care and shed light on the integral role sterility plays in the rehabilitation of a patient. (Potter et. al, 2014 p.33) The lack of hospitals in the nineteenth century translated into a lack of practice for nurses, where not only was nursing considered to be a job, there was no proper educational background to support medical issues that arose due to factors such as the lack of proper regulations and protocol during the war. Nightingale realized there was no proper education system setup to educate and teach nurses, which led her to establish the first nursing

school in 1860 (Potter et. al, 2014 p.34). The first nursing school was located in London, England but shortly after, Canada followed suit when Mary Agnes Snively opened the St. Catherine's Training School in 1874 (Potter et. al, 2014 p.35). Snively enrolled a mandatory three-year education, this mandated regulation set the standard high, limiting who can become registered and this regulation is still practiced in modern nursing. Nursing has since progressed into a profession rather than an occupation, which has adapted from a three-year training program to a two-year college diploma and finally now a four-year university level degree mandated by the regulatory body.

My personal motivations are in stark contrast to the familial factors, which often contribute to a person's pursuit of the nursing profession. Not one person put the interest in my head of pursuing the nursing profession, if anything I was pushed away from the idea with the intent of putting the ideas in my head that I could amount to something better. As a young child I looked up to my grandfather, who was a physician. Due to our close relationship, my whole family pushed me towards the idea of following in his footsteps, and at the age of three I received my first stethoscope. My family watched with curiosity as a toddler discovered how to properly use it. Without failure, I easily mastered correct placement of the ear tips and the tunable diaphragm. Years later, and still with many voices telling me to become a physician; my grandfather fell ill, and we spent a whole summer in the hospice, enjoying every last moment we could have with him. Over the summer, I realized the impact nurses make on medicine, and although my whole family passively forced the idea upon me to become a doctor, I knew that I didn't want the job of a physician- I meticulously observed the work of the doctors that summer, how they would to walk into a room and sign paperwork and walk back out without any interaction with the client and their loved ones. On a Sunday afternoon, I was sitting watching

television with my grandfather and I asked him if he ever thought about becoming a nurse instead of a doctor and his words have resonated in my head since. He told me that during his university days, nursing was viewed as a female profession and that he would have been ridiculed for even considering it. He also added that if he could go back in time, he would have considered it. After spending almost half a decade in hospitals fighting cancer, he said that he appreciates nurses and their profession more than any other profession out there. Defying my family's aspirations for me, that summer I decided to become a nurse. My grandfather who was both a patient and a doctor allowed me to recognize the disconnect between the two. I am confident that I will grow into a role that is a conduit between patients, their families, and the doctors. I appreciate the multidisciplinary approach to patient-centered care that large hospital networks are implementing and I look forward to becoming a part of it.

One quality that is most commonly referenced is possessing the caring trait. This trait seems to be a recurring motive for people entering the nursing profession. In my opinion this statement is too general, which translates into a similarity that commonly is associated with a nurse. If the thought was truly exercised, then the statement of helping others would narrow down into smaller categories which all revolve around the idea of providing care. Providing care would not just be about the patient, it would also involve the family and the doctor associated with the patient. Many others, including myself pursue nursing to offer a specialized form of care that allows us to get to know the patient on a more personal level. Saying this, an excerpt found from the *Journal of Advanced Nursing* (Bertello, Eley, Eley & Rogers-Clark, 2012) includes direct quotes from registered nurses which clearly coincides with my point that the main idea is to provide care, although many dismiss there is much more to the profession. "I am a fairly caring person, I like the thought of being able to contribute and have a worthwhile job where I

feel I can contribute to society in some way. That's how nursing is perceived, that you can help people and I like the idea of being able to impact people's lives through healing" (Bertello et. al, 2012) In addition, "In a quantitative study of the image of nursing and shortage in the workplace found that nursing students' perceptions of occupational characteristics that attracted them to nursing were mainly related to career income (65%), job security (55%), interesting work (71%) and the ability to make a difference (65%)." (Cowin, Johnson, Wilkes 2014 pg. 3) This excerpt can easily be compared to why I went into nursing, one of my biggest fears is going into a job that I won't find interesting after many years, nursing provides a perfect balance. Nursing as a profession offers many different paths that one can choose from once registered, and even if I stay on one path of nursing for my whole career, there will still be new faces and scenarios every day, which will keep me on my feet and my brain stimulated.

The demand for nurses in our westernized society has increased, as a result there are many jobs available, and the occupational opportunity has a huge impact on a student when it comes to choosing their degree. Many people go into nursing, not for passion but just with the knowledge that there will be a job at the end of their four-year degree. Not only are the job opportunities almost guaranteed, there is a good pay involved as well which is a prime motivator for some students. In contrast to this, my reasoning for entering the nursing profession was the polar opposite, in my opinion these two things are just additional bonuses that come along with the profession but had nothing to do with why I decided to pursue nursing.

Familial pressure plays a key role in the decision of becoming a nurse. "Overall our findings regarding 'reasons for entering nursing' were congruent with previous work which include ...family history." Students with family members in nursing are likely to enroll in nursing due to their lives always consisting of nursing even in the slightest, by hearing stories at the dinner table

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or even having the idea planted in their head. In contrast, I have had no external influence by family members within the same profession, and the decision to go into nursing has been made solely by me.

In conclusion, nursing is a profession that has evolved significantly to become as advanced as it is today. It is certain that the nursing profession will continue to change and adapt to technological advancements, new diseases and hurdles. However, with the impressive early nineteenth century advantages many individuals such as Florence Nightingale and Mary Agnes Snively they have made the hurdles a little more attainable through the discovery of sterility, cleanliness and the educational standard being raised has only improved overall health care for the better.

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