

Improving the Public Image of the Nursing Profession: An Enduring Challenge for Nurses

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Dear Editor

Nursing image is associated with the role and identity of nurses, so that this concept has become one of the long-term challenges for the nursing profession. The image of a profession is actually the assumption and understanding of society about a person, a job or an organization, and accordingly, community perspective toward nursing and sensitivity of public opinion to it, has created a unique image for this profession (1, 2). Feelings of worthlessness and absence of sufficient power and independence among nurses, and also lack of attention to the social status of nursing profession, are the risks that should be considered in this field. These factors as the negative public stereotypes, can create an oppressive environment for the nurses and limit their professional status (1).

According to Kany (2004), in the United States and other Western countries, nursing shortage is a long-term problem and this can be attributed to public image of

nurses and their value in the health system (3). In 2002, American Nurses Association mentioned that the investigation of nursing profession and its unreal images and lack of value in nursing care are important priorities (4). Negative image of nursing can have adverse effects on the quantity and quality of the individuals who choose this profession. The media often portrays nursing in women and this affects the employment of men in this field. The public image of the nursing could also influence on laws passed by policy makers and people who define the scope and investment in nursing services. It is also associated with problems in the self-image of nurses, leading to diminished self-esteem, beliefs and values, which in turn will exacerbate the negative image among the society (2, 5, 6). From the perspective of students and adults who are in search of new jobs, value of nursing care is not considerable (5). Poor social image of nursing leads to feelings of neglect

and lack of appreciation and respect in nursing (7).

Various factors, such as the media and television, newspapers and magazines, covering style, nurses' behaviors and communication between professionals, can be effective in shaping the public image of nursing in the community (8). According to the studies carried out in Iran, nursing has a poor public image and among the factors, the role of media in creating such an image is important (5, 9). A study in 2014 reported that the most important factors contributing to the negative image of nursing from people and nurses' perspectives were attending hospital as a patient or as a patient's entourage, television serials and movies. Factors, such as employment of a relative in the nursing profession,

novels and stories, news and newspapers, had less importance from the public perspective (1).

Due to the great number of people employed in the nursing profession, if each of them tries to change the image of nursing, it will have a considerable effect on improving the image. All nurses' concerns should also be improving nursing image through the time of interacting one-by-one with patient and his entourages, people and other professionals. It is suggested that studies be performed to investigate the effect of each of above-mentioned factors, especially media, on the of the nursing's public image, and to present appropriate strategies for improving the image of nursing in Iran.

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