

A Nurse's Journey

By Ms Tan Wee King

IN THE BEGINNING...

When doctors and nurses chose healthcare,
Our primary goal was patients' welfare;
Parents' aspiration or our own to dare:
Help people feel better, love our care.

As students we sweated over toxicology
Marvelled at anatomy and physiology
Struggled with pathophysiology and aetiology
And mulled over microbiology and pharmacology.

Mastering nursing knowledge made us proud,
Budding Florence Nightingales ready to be,
Sternly reminded to be always gentle never loud
Smart in proper uniforms starched and over the knee.

Naïve and green during the first clinical posting
Armed with a big heart and a ready smile;
Attending to real patients was quite daunting
But still, ever ready to go the extra mile.

Professional role models though a dearth
Blissful days were bountiful treasured gems,
Kindly souls did show the ropes, soothe the hurts
They spurred me on to boldly realise dreams I dreamed.

Anyone in a white coat I viewed with admiration,
Only to realise many were really curious medical students;
Mutual support in common quests set friendships in motion,
Good learning in and out of the wards with us nursing students.

BEING A REGISTERED NURSE...

My first posting upon graduation was a little known chronic sick unit,
Lively daily ward rounds peppered with accounts of nurses' kind deeds,
The solo doctor thoroughly enjoyed the warm family-like relationship knit,
Many involved patients unreservedly shared their personal and intimate needs.

As pioneer ambulance officer, I enjoyed work with friendly ER interns
Accurate assessment of patients' presentations and history they valued.
Appreciated the radio communications to initiate life-saving treatments,
Hints of positive difference gathered from ready feedback and salutes.



A warm family atmosphere promotes goodwill and cordial relations among colleagues at the Chronic Sick Unit.



Learning together built firm friendships that lasted for decades.



Passing on the learning brings a glow of pride – to add a stroke on the future of nursing in Singapore.

About the author:

Ms Tan Wee King is currently Section Head (Academic) / Nursing, Institute of Technical Education, where the two-year NITEC in Nursing course prepares candidates to register with Singapore Nursing Board as Enrolled Nurses. Ms Tan is also President of Singapore Nurses Association, Fellow of Commonwealth Foundation, Council Member of Singapore Red Cross, and Chairman of Yio Chu Kang Civil Defence Executive Committee. She received the President's Award for Nurses (2000) and Professional Nurse Award (1995).

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Gentlemanly demeanours of a brilliant surgeon linger in my memory:
Registrars, medical officers and housemen ensured accurate history
Nurses and patients never failed to admire and marvel at his mastery
Diagnoses, pathologies, prognoses always discussed with due courtesy.

Much treasured collegial respect during daily interactions
Prevented high tension ward rounds and promoted relations
Subtly increased patients' confidence and trust in our professions
True to the very existence and reasons for healthcare organisations.

Nurses and doctors would relate to each other with mutual respect,
Share common traits of skilful competence, professional knowledge
Firm passion, sincere empathy, fair camaraderie, confidence intact;
Show patients and significant others our high emotional quotient edge.

As an eager midwife in the delivery room, met quirky obstetricians,
Transformed from mostly "sugar and spice and all things nice"
Became unreasonable and nasty when late for the "next generation"
Professional ones always grateful, yet others were cold as ice.

Neonatology in its infancy held great challenges for all in the team
Together we looked for ways to protect the immature systems
And rode the emotional roller coaster watching for the beam,
Inspired by the tiny ones' amazing tenacity though pre-term.

WHAT REALLY MATTER?

When we chose healthcare our gender did not matter;
Naïve idealistic youths brimming with noble notions
Situations difficult and unusual? The more the better!
Come one come all, with ills at any of life's junctions.

Engaging in nursing education for a fresh perspective,
Endeavour to prepare nurses ready, confident and true,
Budding nurses filled with passion, keen and proactive
Imbued with empathy, discipline, useful emergency tools.

Relating to known doctors as friends and fellow volunteers
Was a comforting reminder of our common human qualities;
Brought forth deep-seated rousing loyalty of brave musketeers
Wished this noble shared calling was found in greater quantities.

Tranquil backwaters of healthcare caring for the chronically ill,
Or frontlines with sirens in pre-hospital care and emergency rooms;
Caring for vulnerable premature infants going up and down the hill
Doctors and nurses, junior or senior, sound attributes we must groom!

Doctors, do use your leadership in the healthcare team right
Nurses partners in your quest for best care for patients make,
Let's work harmoniously for a synergistic future bright
Well-coordinated holistic healthcare teams forward take. ■



Though each has since chosen different routes, some in nursing, others not, the common experiences as ambulance officers never fail to bond.



Nursing has moulded me to be who I am today. Contributing back to the profession through the Singapore Nurses Association is one way of showing my gratefulness. (Ms Tan is first from left.)



Professional consulting promotes mutual learning and respect for each other. Appreciate the good that you can do just by acknowledging each other for who we are.