

2013 Winning Essays

2013 A Nurse I Am Scholarship winners were asked to answer the following:



A. The movie "A Nurse I Am" provides a wealth of insights and approaches to be considered by future nurses, new nurses and seasoned nurses. According to Joyce Newman-Giger, "When nurses consider race, ethnicity, culture, and cultural heritage, they become more sensitive to clients." Considering this statement, what two nurses in the film seem to best portray or consider the importance of culture in their approach to patient care? Explain why.

B. The United States thrives as an expanding multicultural pluralistic society. As a nurse, how and why will you step forward to offer culturally competent care?

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The nursing field requires a unique trifecta of emotional intelligence, adaptation and cultural awareness. Culture is deeper than skin color, ethnic background or language. It encompasses the client's total way of life and the environment in which they live. And it falls to the nurse to discover the client's cultural basis and the values therein in order to serve fully.

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Nurses pledge to care for others regardless of a client's race or background. Good nursing sets aside judgments and beliefs in order to quickly analyze and understand the cultural makeup of those being served so the message will be readily received.

In the film, "A Nurse I Am," the nurses featured are effective, skillful listeners and strong communicators who know when to lead and when to be a bulwark support. I felt that Mona Counts and Ardis Bush were the two best portrayals of healthcare providers who seamlessly incorporate the cultures of their patients into their care.

Ms. Counts serves her clients on the level of community-wide culture. She seeks to understand the underlying motives of her clients and to

view her clients as a whole person across a lifespan. She establishes trust by speaking at the appropriate health literacy level and often uses direct communication coupled with demonstrative compassion and approachability. She embodies the autonomous aspects of nursing and supports clients even when decisions do not promote maximal health. Examples of this were seen with Virginia Tucker, the elderly client with suspected renal failure who wished to stay in her home rather than move into a nursing facility, and with Roxie the large woman and longtime smoker. Rather than Ms. Counts scolding Roxie for this habit, she remains objective and suggests a nicotine patch. Ms. Counts exhibits a clear understanding of the culture of the Appalachian community and realizes that health improvements may be more readily achievable in small transitions.

In getting to know Ms. Ardis Bush, I see her as a healthcare provider who strives to understand her client's personal culture. This makes Ms. Bush an effective information provider, one of the most important skills to have when crossing cultural barriers. In her words, "I use my life experiences to help me communicate: and I see that she is able to communicate simply and calmly to patients and to ask tough questions of them and on their behalf. She asserts a gentle strength and radiant smile which helps convey her compassion to the patient's condition. Ms. Bush takes time to get to know her patients and uses her listening skills to help patients consider their options. She takes time to find out what matters to patients and their families, such as asking what level of pain is acceptable. This facilitates the client in becoming more involved in their own healthcare management and draws out independence.

Ms. Counts and Ms. Bush treat the client as a person who is respected and loved, and is a valued member of a larger whole-whether it be among the larger community or within a small family. Like these nurses, I will aim to be adaptive to the client in front of me and work to their strengths. I will also extend this outlook to my peer nurses and other healthcare providers with whom I work.

As a future nurse, my job will be to provide culturally competent care. I will do this by looking to exemplary nurses such as Mona Counts and Ardis Bush. I must maintain an open mind, be willing to challenge my beliefs regularly and to be adaptive.

To summarize, nursing runs parallel to the nation's rapidly shifting demographics and nursing is redefined in response to pluralism. As the health of the nation comes to rest more heavily on nursing care, nurses may emerge as the nation's overlooked heroes.

Caring for others is demanding intellectually, physically and emotionally and health is a continuum over the lifetime. It triples out into communities and measures quality of life. As a nurse, I will help individuals and families confront the most dynamic issues of their lives

and build communities of care and it is especially important to be sensitive to their individual, multicultural needs. As I become more aware of the bridge between the scope of nursing and the role of cultural sensitivity, I realize it is an important component of nursing to look at the holistic person and to provide competent nursing with dignity, mercy and special consideration to culture. This is the caliber of competent, culturally-aware, compassionate nurses.



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