

International Conference on

NURSING EDUCATION & PRACTICE

November 26-27, 2018 | Las Vegas, USA



Heather Marie Walsh

Walsh Consulting Services, USA

The public image and education of nurses

The Problem: What is a nurse? “Defining Nursing is harder than it seems” says Kay Kittrell Chitty, RN, EdD (“Professional Nursing: Concepts and Challenges, 2010, Saunders/Elsevier). Indeed, there is no succinct way to describe what a nurse is. It seems to vary by culture and generations. If the profession itself cannot articulate easily what a nurse is, and do not insist on being heard, how can we expect society or mass media to understand how to portray us? To confuse matters more, as Dr. Chitty says “professions exist to serve society, and as society changes, professions must also change.” Certainly, Nursing has evolved with nursing researchers adding to health care and nursing science with evidence-based practice, and registered nurses also now perform many procedures previously performed by medical doctors. The Nursing field has numerous regulated and certified advanced practice nurses, nurse policy leaders, scientists and researchers. Despite the advances in Nursing however, nurses remain largely marginalized, invisible, silent, caricaturized, or disenfranchised by mass media. Communication or dialogue with mass media continues to be challenging. Suzanne Gordon and Bernice Burnese’s book, “From Silence to Voice” still applies. However, with the “graying of America,” looming health care reforms, and the future health care needs of society escalating, it becomes more urgent for professional nurses to stand up and make themselves seen and heard in mainstream society so that we may be able to recruit future nurses, and educate the public to

gain the respect and confidence to meet the demands of the health care needs of the future. Several studies, for example, by the Center for Nursing Advocacy at John Hopkins University, state that “the inadequate and inaccurate portrayal of nurses in media contribute to the public misconceptions about the profession and thereby to the nursing shortage.”

Results: The Woodhull Study was designed “to survey and analyze the portrayal of health care and nursing in U.S. newspapers, news magazines, and health care industry trade publications. Key findings: Nurses and the Nursing Profession are essentially invisible in Media coverage of health care and consequently, to the American public. Nurses were cited only 4% of the time in over 2000 health related articles from 16 major news publications. Those few references were only mentioned in passing. Woodhull said that the Health care industry publications were no more likely to take advantage of nursing expertise. Thus, powerful social influences such as the media project an image of nursing that is often distorted and led the public to develop misconceptions about nursing and nurses themselves” (Adapted from Sigma Theta Tau International: The Woodhull study on nursing and the media: health care’s invisible partner, Indianapolis, IN 1998, Sigma Theta Tau International Center Nursing Press.) This was a common theme in the literature and furthermore, that this inaccurate image sends the wrong message to bright young people who are considering career choices.

Biography

Heather Marie Walsh Originally educated in Canada, Heather completed her Masters in Science, in Nursing Education at the University of Hartford, Connecticut, and specializes in Adult Medical Surgical Critical Care, Leadership, Psychiatry, Geriatrics, Transcultural Nursing, and Simulation Learning. She has forty years of diverse Nursing experience, from ICU to Infection Control, Psychiatry, and Transcultural and Trans-generational Education. She is a Nurse educator, published writer, scriptwriter, and a textbook reviewer. Heather has taught at UCLA, WCU, Seminars & more. She is the CEO of Walsh Consulting Services, Los Angeles, California.

ProfWalshRN@gmail.com