

# Projecting Ourselves As Professionals

By Gloria Stephens

We are entering a new era in which nursing must assume its rightful place as a leader and a change agent in the health care field. We must be watchful of our professional role in the operating room, and not abdicate any of the patient care responsibilities. As nurses we can either accept the challenge to fight for our rightful place in the health care system or continue to perpetuate the current system. When accepting the challenge of change we must be prepared to accept and use new responses and put aside old strategies.

In the words of Doctor Earle Scarlett, "... any profession worthy of the name must forever be strengthening, and recreating its traditions. A profession is a sensitive, organic, growing thing, not a static order...". We therefore, must be prepared to advance into new and different roles as professional operating room nurses. The strategic plan of the Operating Room Nurses Association of Canada indicates many issues for the operating room nurse. To mention a few: waste management/environment; certification; expanded role of the O.R. nurse as Assistant to the Anaesthetist; and R.N. First Assistant, and, research activities. Another issue is to increase the professional status through education.

Scientific research is an essential element in a professional's education says Barbara K. Miller in "Model for Professionalism in Nursing". She further states, "educators have proclaimed this for decades but its difficult to convince the masses".

Characteristics essential to a professional include:

- Practising under the CNA Code for Nurses
- Giving service to the Community
- Participating in Professional Organization
- Autonomy
- Sharing knowledge thru speaking and writing (Publication/Communication)
- Participating in Research
- Continuing one's Education and promoting Competencies and certification

It is vital that each operating room nurse does more than just the daily work routines; we must broaden our perspectives; keep "on top" of the changes, and pro-

posed changes within nursing as well as the role of the OR nurse in the operating room. We must be proactive rather than reactive. It is time for all nurses to critically examine their acceptance of certain "tenets" of professionalism.

Start marketing yourself as a professional:

1. Take a business approach to your career.
2. Develop writing skills - (publish in journals, present papers).
3. Learn to dress for power and success (your clothes make a statement about you).
4. Define what we do in a creative manner.
5. Market the "package" to the patient and other healthcare workers, e.g. O.R. Nurse day - Nov. 14th.
6. Enhance the professional image (portray OR nursing as a career for persons desiring power, status, respect, opportunities and job satisfaction).
7. Keep abreast of trends (take courses, certification exams).
8. Serve as a mentor/preceptor in the clinical areas.
9. Professional development - (serve on committees, make your name known-positively).
10. Keep an up-to-date resume. Use self-development inventory.

11. Portray a professional image whether on duty or off. (Appearance is a major part of wellness, but many health care professionals look more like illness models. Guard your health. We are so busy caring for others that we neglect ourselves).

12. Be able to "sell yourself". Always present your ideas and yourself positively and *take risks*. Living creatively eliminates failure. Invest in yourself.

13. Keep trying to visualize your goals. Set goals and then make plans to achieve them. Instead of waiting take charge and make things happen. Don't be a victim of life, be an initiator. Make dreams come true.

Ask yourself these questions:

- Where are we in the profession of nursing.
- How and where do I want to go in nursing? How do I want the profession of nursing to develop?
- What are my priorities; for my nursing career; for my profession of nursing?

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