

National Nurses Week, a tribute to “Front-line Heroes”

During the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020, nurses continue to be among the “Front-line Heroes” to work long, arduous hours, sifting through the chaos, taking care of their patients. Their selfless actions have saved an incalculable number of lives and touched many more. It is time to stop and recognize these essential workers and provide them with public praise for working non-stop to protect and heal the public from a health care crisis that shocked our nation. This pandemic has caused expansive devastation, halting much of the nation’s businesses and activities. The exception, however, is the health care business and its workers. When tragedy struck, they were expected to switch into crisis mode and handle the unthinkable. It is clear they succeeded. The health care providers arose admirably to the task and took care of all patients as their own. This week just happens to be National Nurses Week; we give tribute, as it could have come at a more appropriate time.

This week’s Active Aging 365 blog is dedicated to nurses everywhere. National Nurses Week begins each year on May 6th and ends on May 12th, which happens to be Florence Nightingale’s birthday, born on May 12, 1820. On this year’s 200th birthday, she is honored as the first true pioneer of modern nursing.

Florence Nightingale is one of the most renowned and innovative leaders in nursing history. Through her enlightened and perceptive ideas, she established the first nursing philosophy based on health maintenance and restoration. It was this ideology that produced Florence Nightingale’s belief that nurses were in charge of the whole health of the patient, a revolutionary idea that is instilled in nurses even today’s modern society. In addition to her contributions in nursing philosophy, her legacy also includes many other significant roles. She is known for her work as a writer, statistician, and the impressive fact that she is noted as the first practicing nurse epidemiologist. Another exceptional feat Florence Nightingale accomplished was the development of the first organized program for training nurses, which was founded in St. Thomas’ Hospital in London. Along with her many accomplishments in academia, Florence Nightingale was a woman of action; she symbolized a selfless and heroic nurse. She proved her true spirit as a nurse when she volunteered in the battlefield hospitals during the Crimean War in 1853. It is said she could often be seen traveling at night from various battlefield hospitals with her lamp. For this reason, she is often referred to as “Lady with the Lamp.” (Potter, et al. 2017) Just as Florence was a front-line worker on the battlefields so long ago, so too are the nurses of today. They are front-line and essential workers, tirelessly working to ensure the health of others, and much more. The work of a nurse is highly diverse and intrinsically woven throughout the entirety of the health care process.

21st century nursing is the glue that holds a patient’s health care journey together. Wherever there is someone in need of care, nurses work resolutely in order to identify and protect the needs of their patients. This makes them the best advocates for us and everyone everywhere every day. This, however, is only one small part of the multi-faceted job requirements and diverse responsibilities expected of a nurse.

Nursing is a highly specialized profession. It reflects a time-honored reputation for those who are compassionate and dedicated. The job of a nurse is varied and constantly evolving in order to address the needs of society. No matter what specific job a nurse performs, one fact remains constant, and that is, nurses are indispensable in safeguarding the health of the public.

Despite the varying jobs and functions of a nurse, one thing is for sure, nursing is defined by a unifying ethos. Nursing requires both a caring heart and a sharp mind. The caring heart is required in order to ensure that all patients are treated with the dignity they deserve. The caring and compassion are supported by the intellect a nurse must possess. Without exception, nurses must be critical thinkers. In addition to assessing patients' test results, nurses must look beyond the paper to see the person. It is a nurse's job to consider patients' biological, physical, and psychological needs as well as any results and diagnoses assigned to the patient. It takes an intuitive nature and accelerated cognitive abilities to compose the comprehensive picture of a patient with all the aforementioned features. Without a doubt, nurses are a rare and exceptional breed. To honor this heroic profession, the American Nurses Association, or ANA, decided to make May a month-long celebration, providing a theme for each week in May. Information taken from <https://www.nursingworld.org/practice-policy/workforce/what-is-nursing/>.

According to the ANA's site, <https://www.aana.com/membership/national-nurses-month> the following information is a breakdown of their weekly schedules for the month of May as it relates to honoring nurses.

Week 1, May 1-9 is dedicated to Self-Care. The ANA wants to begin with mindful self-recognition. They say to focus on your and others' emotional and physical well-being and challenge yourself and others to adopt healthier habits.

Week 2, May 10-16 is dedicated to Recognition. The ANA wants to raise awareness and visibility of the critical work nurses do while working to educate others on the diverse nature of the profession.

Week 3, May 17-23 is dedicated to Professional Development. The ANA asks nurses to focus on how they can excel in their career or inspire and help others in their professional nursing journey.

Week 4, May 24-31 is dedicated to Community Engagement. The ANA wants to help promote nurses' invaluable contributions by educating communities about what nurses do, and work to inspire future nurses.

The staff here at Active Aging 365 definitely believe we can contribute to the recognition, honoring, education, and community engagement of and for the nursing community. Our challenge for you is to take a brief moment to think about a nurse who has made a difference in your life. Then, write them a short thank you note or email. Small gestures of kindness and recognition are treasured by the much deserving recipients, especially in light of our current state of health care due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Nurses deserve medals of honor for working tirelessly to ensure the health of the public. Active Aging 365 send our heartfelt expression of recognition, gratitude, and praise to nurses everywhere. We believe every nurse is a hero.

We would like to dedicate this blog as a tribute to Deb Stevers, a long-time nursing veteran, who lost her battle with the COVID-19 Coronavirus on May 12th, 2020. Nurse Stevers was known as a health care hero. She died after fighting on the front-line, taking care of the community's health care needs. May her wings in heaven be as mighty and healing as they were here on earth.

There is actually a great way to honor nurses who have passed on. It is called the Nightingale Tribute. It is a tribute to any Registered Nurse or Licensed Practical Nurse for their years of service to be presented during the nurse's funeral by a nurse colleague or friend. The brochure in PDF format is available for download.

Thank you for visiting us and spending your precious time with us at Active Aging 365 and we wish you and your family continued to thrive everyday with active health.

Lastly, we wanted to share a Youtube video - it is a rare capture of Florence Nightingale's voice. <https://youtu.be/ax3B4gRQNU4>

References Cited

Potter, Patricia Ann, et al. *Fundamentals of Nursing*. Mosby Elsevier, 2017.

<https://www.aana.com/membership/national-nurses-month>

<https://www.nursingworld.org/education-events/national-nurses-week/history/>

<https://www.nursingworld.org/practice-policy/workforce/what-is-nursing/>