



Male Nurse Diary

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I Changed My Career Path from Politics to Nursing

I recall my second year in college, while sitting in my political administration class; I was occupied not by how to manage people but by the doubts of my major. Some of my classmates were going into politics, some decided to become activists, and some to work for the government. What about me? What path should I follow? Even though I was unsure of my future, my part-time job at the first aid center on campus provided some exposure to emergency response and involvement with campus health awareness campaign. I enjoyed the field of healthcare and it seemed to fit my personal character well. Therefore, with the help of a senior nursing student, I transferred to nursing department after my sophomore year.

It was a very different world after I transferred to nursing. In order to graduate on time, I took as many credits as possible for the following two and half years; four classes in the morning and two classes in the afternoon. And I skipped dinner time and continued to take evening classes with seniors who took courses for advanced scholarship. There were countless nights, before various exams and before the deadline of handling reports, I stayed up like I'd swallowed all sorts of nursing knowledge and textbooks with tears and to come up with a report and good grades. I couldn't tell my family about my struggles and none of my friends understood the agony of studying nursing. While I felt like giving up, they just reminded me that it's my own choice.

Right before graduation, when most of my classmates had landed jobs at hospitals, I was the only one who ran into trouble. Because of the unknown date of graduation, I was eliminated from the first round screening. It frustrated me because I considered myself to be among the top of the class (It later proved I was), I was certain that I would pass the nursing certification exam (later I ranked at the top of the candidates passing the exam nationally). Professors always praised about my clinical internship. How could I not be hired?

Later, at a small booth in a job fair, I met a senior ER male nurse, Huang Chun-Chao, head nurse of ER in Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital, who shared with me his own struggle. He also talked about the challenges of being a male nurse in the work environment and the path he took to get to where he is now. One of the things he said to me was, “Be prepared and be ready. We will wait for you.” Those few words motivated me to overcome hurdles and later work as his fellow colleague.

Armed with self-confidence to start working, I realized what I learned in school is just a tip of the iceberg. The mere number of syringe shots given in a day, medications prescribed, and dressings changed were more than the total four-year experience I had in college. Aside from the heavy work load (nurse to patient ratio was one to one during internship versus fourteen patients under my care), I also needed to spend extra time with hostile patients and families. I had contemplated quitting during my first month at the job. “The most evil and disgusting view is people, especially sick people and their families.” That was the only thing going through my mind every morning when I clocked in at work. All I had was the thought of quitting. I kept the friendly and smiling façade but underneath my face mask, I was full of resentment, frustration and anger.

It was not until my encounter with a patient undergoing cardiac arrest at the OHCA (out of hospital cardiac arrest)





that I had a change of heart. At first, I felt helpless when the only thing I could do was manual resuscitation by pumping the patient's chest. Hearing cries outside the ER and watching a young body turning cold, I finally understood why rush and demanding reaction came from those sick patients and their families. They faced life-threatening situations. Suddenly, all my pain and struggle were minuscule in comparison. I remember there was an old saying in school, "Nurses eat their young." During the junior period of my nursing career, it was not about harassment or bully, it was my negative attitude that nearly devoured my soul.

It has been awhile since I first started working at the unit. I am no longer the young and inexperienced in the group. Looking back at the time when I first started working, the negatives and the encounters were built upon experience. It may not be understood or appreciated at the time, which is part of growing up. We need to be exposed to different obstacles to build character. As a male nurse, what I see is not just becoming a nurse, but rather to continue to build and reach that goal one step at a time.

