

Do you work in fishnet stockings, short white dresses and reveal cleavage?

The media thinks you do...

It's the 21st century, but the media still routinely portrays your nursing work being done by sex objects, battle-axes, ineffective angels, handmaidens or not at all, often crediting physicians for work that nurses do in real life.

Improving the public image of nursing is a critical step in ending the nursing shortage that threatens global health. When people understand what nurses do to save and improve lives, more resources will flow toward clinical nursing practice, research and education. This will build a larger, stronger and more diverse nursing profession to help protect the health of our society.

We formed the Center for Nursing Advocacy to help nurses build a strong and attractive professional image because we know of no other organization devoted exclusively to this purpose. We analyze what the media is doing and try to improve it. For instance, Clairol Herbal Essences shampoo, Disney, Pennzoil and Physicians Formula cosmetics pulled their advertisements after we launched campaigns to end those "naughty nurse" depictions. We promote nursing as a profession for people like you, who work hard to make a difference.

Studies confirm the obvious: the media affects how people think and what they do. A 2000 JWT study of U.S. youngsters in grades 2-10 found that they got their most striking impressions of nursing from "ER." And consistent with that show's physician-centric message, they wrongly considered nursing "a girl's job," a technical field "like shop" and one too lowly for private school students. These are damaging attitudes about nursing that we must eliminate. A Kaiser Family Foundation found that one out of three "ER" viewers used information learned on the show to make health care decisions. The researchers concluded that it is essential to work for accuracy in fictional health care media so that viewers' did not take away "critical misperceptions about health topics."

To improve staffing and end the nursing shortage, nurses must get the respect they deserve from the media. We have been asking "ER" to hire a nursing advisor since November 2001 to prevent further inaccurate depictions of nursing. They refuse, and their show continues to damage nursing's image. We need you to add your voice to this campaign and others--such as our "Passions" campaign to eliminate the monkey "nurse." The media must begin to learn what you know. Let's work together to increase public understanding of nursing. For you--and your patients.

Join us! We need your help with letter-writing campaigns, media relations, and member support. (Student memberships cost about as much as three lattes.) And help build a world where nursing is seen as a profession that's second to none. Sign up for our free news alerts at www.nursingadvocacy.org/members



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