

Editorial

Are the South African Nurses still relevant to the healthcare needs of the modern-day patient?



As we approach the end of a challenging year, it is important to take a moment to acknowledge the incredible resilience and dedication of nurses in our beloved country, South Africa. The unwavering commitment to providing care, often in the face of overwhelming obstacles, is nothing short of inspiring. As this year comes to a close, it is time for reflection and self-care. The well-being of nurses is crucial for the nurses as well as for all the patients and communities relying on them.

The role of the nurse is still vital to the health and wellbeing of countless individuals and communities. Nurses are not just caregivers, nurses are advocates, educators and pillars of support for patients and their families.

When we look back on a year that tested our limits, it is important to remember that it also showcased our strength and that each of these challenges were opportunities for growth. Take pride in the small victories and the lives you touched this year. Each moment you as a nurse spent caring for a patient is a testament to your commitment and skill and know that your efforts contribute significantly to improving patient outcomes and advancing the nursing profession.

The question that comes to my mind quite often is that of the relevance of today's nurse in providing in the unique needs of modern-day patients.

The relevance of our nurses in addressing the health needs of modern patients is critically important, yet it faces significant challenges. The challenges and hurdles that our nurses encounter in our current healthcare landscape include, but are not limited, to the following:

- *Severe nursing shortage*: the shortage experienced is not only in the number of professional nurses but also in advanced nursing qualifications and work experience. The continuous development in medicine and treatment modalities together with the health needs of an ageing population requires facilities and opportunities for nurses to further their training to provide in these areas. Nurses are uniquely positioned to

address these complex health needs through preventative care, patient education and coordination of services. The call for urgent attention to alleviate the dwindling nursing numbers and training opportunities must be a healthcare services priority.

- *High levels of burnout and job dissatisfaction*: many nurses express dissatisfaction with their working conditions and consider leaving the profession due to the demanding nature of nursing work together with inadequate resources and support. Burnout and dissatisfaction not only affect nurses' wellbeing but also compromises patient outcomes and quality of care.
- *Emigration of skilled workforce*: the dream of better remuneration and working conditions abroad has resulted in a continuous outflow of nurses to greener pastures. Many experienced and specialist nurses are leaving, and this further exacerbates the existing shortages and diminishes institutional knowledge within the country.
- *Advancements in Nursing Education* – enhancing the nurse training programmes with the aim to align nursing education with higher education standards which is essential for developing a skilled workforce capable of meeting our health challenges. The challenges whilst introducing the changes and providing support to the nurses in the new programmes are challenging but exciting and the healthcare industry is awaiting the promised numbers of highly skilled nurses to enter the workplace. Nurses provide essential services across various settings and are often the first point of contact for patients. Nurses play a significant role in administering care, educating patients and managing chronic conditions.

As we look towards the future, we as nurses must remember that our passion for nursing is a powerful force for change. The healthcare landscape may continue to evolve, but a nurse's ability to adapt, learn and lead will shape its direction. Nurses must celebrate their achievements as they are vital to the nurse's personal journey and the collective progress of nursing in South Africa. Embrace the opportunities ahead with optimism and determination.

A closing word of encouragement: Always remember, you are not alone; in times of difficulty, you can lean on the nursing fraternity for support. Through networking and attending professional gatherings, you will realise how strong the bond between nurses is. We are looking forward to meeting and engaging with you at these meetings, workshops and conferences where you will find unique opportunities to share experiences, offer encouragement and uplift one another.

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