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5-2015

## Trauma Nurses: Making a Difference

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### Recommended Citation

Schroeter, Kathryn, "Trauma Nurses: Making a Difference" (2015). *College of Nursing Faculty Research and Publications*. 391.

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## Trauma Nurses: Making a Difference

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According to the American Trauma Society (ATS), May of each year has been designated as National Trauma Awareness Month by President Ronald Reagan and Congress in 1988. Since then, ATS has worked with other trauma organizations, some of which have included Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Emergency Medical Services for Children, United States Sentencing Guidelines, National Safety Council, Mothers Against Drunk Drivers, and the Society of Trauma Nurses to develop injury prevention and trauma awareness materials for use by members in their communities.<sup>1</sup> Each year, a new focus is designated, which relates to injury prevention and raising trauma awareness.

This May, 2015, the ATS, in collaboration with the Society of Trauma Nurses, is once again pleased to present National Trauma Awareness Month. The campaign slogan "3D Trauma Prevention" focuses on contributors to motor vehicle crashes—drugs/drinking, distraction, and drowsiness. This is an all too familiar list that makes driving in the United States a risky endeavor. In 2013, the United States saw more than 32000 fatalities and more than 2.3 million injuries from motor vehicle crashes. Of those,

31% involved an alcohol-impaired driver and 18% involved a distracted driver. Although these numbers have decreased slightly over the past few years, the promotion of prevention strategies and education around risky behaviors must continue until these statistics are eliminated.<sup>2</sup> The ATS has posted this year's campaign materials electronically for your use, not only for May, but also in the months thereafter.

May is also the month that celebrates National Nurses Week (May 6-12, 2015) and commemorates the birthday of Florence Nightingale. The American Nurses Association proudly celebrates the role nurses play in delivering the highest level of quality care to their patients. The 2015 National Nurses Week theme "Ethical Practice. Quality Care." recognizes the importance of ethics in nursing and acknowledges the strong commitment, compassion, and care nurses display in their practice and profession.<sup>3</sup> According to the most recent Gallup poll of December 2014, Americans rate nurses highest on honesty and ethical standards.<sup>4</sup>

I would like to use this time of the year to highlight the impact that trauma nurses have on the communities locally, nationally, and globally. Trauma nurses provide ethical practice and quality care. They are there during all phases of the continuum of trauma care from prevention and preparedness through emergency, surgery, critical care, and rehabilitation. A trauma nurse advocates for the highest level of quality trauma care across the continuum. They truly make a difference in the lives of their patients.

## IMPACT OF NURSES

Growing evidence demonstrates the link between the quality of care nurses provide, patient outcomes, and nurses' level of qualification and expertise. Quality measurement is central in efforts to improve health care delivery and financing. The Interdisciplinary Nursing Quality Research Initiative supported interdisciplinary research teams to address gaps in measuring the contributions of nursing to quality care.<sup>5</sup> The authors addressed cross-cutting issues related to quality; developed measures of patient experience; tested new ways to model the important relationships between structure, process, and outcome; measured care across the continuum; focused on positive aspects of care; examined the relationship of nursing care with outcomes; and measured both nursing and interdisciplinary care.<sup>5</sup>

We are always trying to measure our impact on patient care and outcomes and will most likely continue to do so. Some measures, however, are more intangible. It is difficult, for example, to measure how a patient or a patient's family member feels when a trauma nurse is there providing care during all phases of treatment. The feelings of those who are on the receiving end of trauma care are most often immeasurable. This leaves us wondering if because something is difficult to measure does it mean that it does not exist? Trauma nurses make a difference in the lives of their patients whether that patient is an individual, a family, a community, or a population.

## TRAUMA NURSES MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Trauma care is different because trauma is often the result of serious or critical injuries caused by incidents, such as motor vehicle crashes, falls, or acts of violence. Traumatic events usually happen suddenly and may come with or without warning. Trauma nurses work under stressful conditions and, yet, are there for their patients throughout the continuum of care.

Trauma care is a team initiative where the patient is the focus of the care. The nurses are members of a team who are, in many cases, unsung heroes. They do not think about the rewards of a hero; they just think of providing the care needed for that patient at that time. They often say that they are “just doing their job.” But what they are doing is “making a difference.”

By teaching a class on injury prevention—the trauma nurse is there for the patient(s) and becomes a part of making a difference in the lives of others. This difference can be seen beginning the day of the class to many days or even years afterward as those whom the nurse has taught share the information with others. Teaching about safety and injury prevention could be the difference between a life lost and a life saved. The teachings of a trauma nurse can trickle down to many over time. When nurses teach, they make a difference.

It takes a special type of person to be a nurse, and it truly takes a special type of person to be able to work in the field of trauma. By providing care across the continuum—the trauma nurse is there to be an ethical provider who promotes and advocates for the rights, health and safety of nurses and patients. Trauma nurses provide this care during urgent and emergent situations where time is often of the essence. Yet the trauma nurse is there to care for and to protect their patients—and, in many cases, the patients are not even aware that the nurses are there. When trauma nurses care, they make a difference. As we focus on May being National Trauma Awareness Month and as we acknowledge National Nurses Week, let us also take time to celebrate a bit of both by recognizing that Trauma Nurses Make a Difference.

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