

The Clackamas Print



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Is nursing shortage caused by RNs?

BOB LADU

Contributing Writer

While health care faces a critical nursing shortage, LPNs face an additional battlefield within the ranks of Nursing.

As unfortunate as this may seem, it is a reality we cannot ignore any longer and expect to survive as LPNs. Here is the situation. Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) are educated through a variety of methods including; traditional schooling at colleges and universities taking approximately one to three years to complete; military training and experience taking approximately 1 to 2.5 years to complete; vocational schooling taking two years to complete, and in some cases, nurses aides have been trained in teaching hospitals and have been allowed to be licensed. The commonality between all of these methods is the standard State Board Licensing exam. Everyone must

take and pass the board exam in order to be licensed.

LPNs have a variety of skills and experience. The more experience, generally speaking, the more skill they possess. LPNs have been working in various capacities; in intensive care units (ICUs); medical/surgical floors; long term care facilities (LTC); and specialty units, ie., dialysis, pheresis, IV teams, etc. This allows LPNs to provide some staffing flexibility for hospitals and medical centers as well as LTC facilities.

The problem LPNs are facing, however, comes from Registered Nurse (RN) administrators and managers who see the LPN as a threat to RN job security. As a consequence, managers who are fully capable and trained to function as ICU nurses, specialty care nurses and med/surg nurses are being told that "The position now requires an RN, because LPNs don't have the training." Many of these LPNs have worked and

functioned capably with the highest degree of professionalism and yet are being tossed aside because RNs are feeling the need to secure the job market for themselves (justifying the need for RNs and creating a nursing shortage). This adversarial environment is made worse by State Boards that allow this unfair labor practice to persist. Most state boards of nursing turn their "administrative heads" and refused to deal with the issue. They allow facilities (which in this day and age means RN administrators and RN managers) to narrow the "scope of practice" for LPNs. This is practiced widely in hospitals and medical centers and is done without justification, except to say, "we don't allow LPNs to do this kind of work anymore".

In an ideal world, nurses-LPNs and RNs- would collaborate to ensure a safe and productive healthcare delivery system for the benefit of the

patient. If needed, a system of credits (certification) could be developed for the LPN to provide proof of training in specialty areas which would allow LPNs to continue to provide the excellent care they are capable of giving patients. Areas of certification could include; IVs-including PICC and central line blood products, EKGs, Assessments, Nursing Diagnoses, Care Plans, Etc., etc.

In my own experience as a LPN, I have performed all of these tasks expertly, only to have my scope of practice narrowed to the point where today I perform duties that a Nurses Aide could perform. It is still important work, but is less satisfying; especially when I see RN performing the job I once had with less expertise.

The challenge facing LPNs includes the shortage of Nurses, but also the adversarial work environment created by this new breed of RNs.

Honoring virtue on Memorial Day

ANDREW BERNSTEIN

Guest Writer

Memorial Day is a solemn and sad occasion honoring the American soldiers who gave their lives in war. But it is also a hallowed day—because the values those men fought to defend form the essence of our country: freedom and the rights of the individual.

The United States has never fought a war of conquest. The Revolutionary War was waged to gain freedom from the tyranny of King George. The Civil War was fought to end slavery in this country. The Americans defended liberty in World War Two against the murderous collectivism of the Nazis. Even the Spanish-American War was fought against the brutal colonialism of the Spanish Empire, with the eventual result of Spain's former possessions gaining greater freedom.

The greatest soldiers of American history knew that freedom was sacred; no price paid on its behalf was a sacrifice. George Washington, as commander of the Continental Army, led the way. Despite his years of struggle, and the hardships endured, Washington refused pay for his service. He used his own fortune to help finance the war effort, and, when the Revolution was won, took no money from Congress to help with the much-needed rebuilding of his Mount Vernon estate. General Washington recognized that freedom from tyranny was its own reward. His stirring words to Joseph Reed make clear his (and his compatriots) reasons for waging the Revolutionary War: "The

spirit of freedom beat too high in us to submit to slavery."

Douglas MacArthur—another great leader—as military commander of occupied Japan, made it his highest priority to establish the post-war Japanese government and economy on the principle of political/economic freedom. The relative liberty and prosperity of Japan's newly semi-capitalist system owes much to MacArthur's wisdom and efforts. Observing the fruits of his labor, he stated before Congress that America's former enemies had "from the ashes left in war's wake, erected in Japan an edifice dedicated to the primacy of individual liberty...freedom of economic enterprise, and social justice." General MacArthur recognized that part of America's real victory in the Pacific was Japan's vastly increased freedom.

Regular American soldiers have fought and died for freedom around the globe. South Korea today is free, not a part of North Korea's murderous dictatorship, because U.S. soldiers helped defeat Communist aggression in the Korean War. Similarly, as long as American soldiers fought in Vietnam, the Communists were held at bay, unable to achieve their goal of conquest. Only after American politicians pulled all U.S. military personnel out of Vietnam in 1975 did the country fall, and the Communists, then unrestrained, enslaved the Vietnamese.

To fully appreciate the virtue of our soldiers we must remember what freedom means. It means we can choose our own fields of study, our own careers, our own spouses, the size of our families and our places of resi-

dence. It means we can speak out without fear regarding any issue—including governmental policy—choose our values, without interference from the state.

Freedom is based on the inalienable right of each individual to pursue his own goals and his own personal happiness. During America's Revolutionary period, one New Hampshire state document summed up the thinking of our Founding Fathers regarding an individual's rights, "among which are the enjoying and defending life and liberty; acquiring, possessing and protecting property; and in a word, of seeking and obtaining happiness." This is the principle—and the spirit—that our soldiers defend.

The meaning of Memorial Day is particularly pressing today when the United States is engaged in a war against fanatics who represent the extreme of intellectual, religious and political suppression. Freedom is unknown and utterly alien in the countries that support terrorists. They feel threatened by our most cherished principles and institutions, and so they seek to destroy us.

What protects us is our moral courage and our military might. If President Bush has the moral conviction to permit our soldiers to fully wage war against our enemies, they will prevail, as they have so many times in the past. Once again, their blood and their lives, spilled and lost in defense of freedom, will not have been given in vain. On Memorial Day we solemnly and properly honor those heroes who have fought and died in defense of America's freedom.

Letters to the Editor

Thank you Print

Dear Clackamas Print,

Thank you for printing the letters to the editor that were written in response to the "Porn Star" article and displayed the opposing viewpoint of pornography. I, my friends, family members and church acquaintances appreciate that you listened to the voices of your readers. Please send my thanks to the rest of your crew at the CCC Print. God bless.

*Paul Southwick
Student*

Kudos to the Print

Dear Clackamas Print,

Fine job, staff! Congratulations on the second place in General Excellence award and the eight individual awards you gathered last Friday at the Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association awards ceremony. The English department is very proud of all your hard work and accomplishments. You provide a great service to the whole institution, and it is good to see your talents recognized. Thank you for all your hard work! You do us proud!

*Emily Orlando
Chair, English Department*