

Joan Medberry Memorial UNAP Scholarship Fund

As a registered nurse of over 24 years, I believe one of the major problems facing the healthcare system today is our ability to connect with our patients. Over the past three decades the healthcare system has undergone tremendous advances in technology and science. With advances in technology we have gone from being a healthcare delivery system that was once high-touch/ low-tech, to a delivery system that is high-tech/ low-touch. In doing so, the health care system has moved from a personal, deeply human approach to health care delivery, toward an impersonal, distant approach to health care delivery. This shift has led to decreased patient and family satisfaction and increased nursing burnout and frustration.

As a nurse, I enjoy the connection I share with patients and their families. After all, at the heart of nursing is the nurse-patient relationship. Perhaps the greatest cause of dissatisfaction among patients and nurses alike is the fact that technology has taken the nurse away from the bedside. Currently, we spend more time delegating and documenting care than we actually spend with the patient. Many nurses entering the profession do so because they find interacting with patients and families to be an essential facet, and satisfying aspect, of the job. Likewise patients and families rely heavily upon the nurse not only for physical care, but emotional, psychological and spiritual care. Today's nurse must deliver multi-culturally sensitive, holistic care to a population of more acutely ill and complex patients.

In order to effectively meet the needs of patients, today's nurses *must* spend more time at the bedside. I believe it is necessary for nurses to make this need known at all levels of healthcare delivery decision making. First, this requires a strong voice to be heard at the nursing unit level to address staffing ratios and acuity levels. Second, nurses must advocate for better staffing both at the Hospital level and through local Union representation. Lastly, as nurses, we can all be politically active by making our voices heard at legislative meetings, either at the state or national level through professional nursing organizations. As a united front, we can restore our connectedness with our patients and their families while promoting nursing satisfaction and patient safety.