



# What #MeToo means for nurses

Take action; be the change.

Will the worldwide response to the recent disclosures of sexual assault and harassment cases in entertainment, music, sports, and politics shed light on related issues in healthcare?

The #MeToo movement has taken the world by storm, and many say it's been a long time coming.

*The New York Times* revelation last

fall seemed shocking at the time—famed Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein was accused by multiple women of sexual misconduct in what appeared to be an alleged pattern of psychological manipulation and strategic harassment spanning decades. Apparently, some victims were paid for their silence. Most reactions I heard about the “Weinstein phenomena” from news reporters and colleagues agreed about one key point: It was wrong.

I remember thinking about the impact the Weinstein revelation might have on nursing. In my view, the victims who bravely came forward with their stories had clearly been bullied in the workplace and had experienced psychological and physical assault at the most egregious level. Sadly, nursing shares a similar reality. Just consider this statement on the American Nurses Association (ANA) website: “ANA recognizes that incivility, bullying, and violence in the workplace are serious issues in nursing. Currently, there is no federal standard that requires workplace violence protections.”

ANA has been addressing this issue for many years. As a chief nursing officer, I've often used

ANA's materials, books, slides, and talking points on the subject and now incorporate them into the academic courses I teach. However, I have no way of knowing the true numbers of nursing staff affected since current measures and ways of reporting these incidents are inadequate at best.

How many nurses have encountered similar issues but kept silent thinking that nothing would be done or that no one really cared? How many nurses are among the millions of women who have responded #MeToo?

At least the enormous scale of the bigger problem is coming to light. The sheer numbers of those affected have been revealed, but not as a formal call to action with protests and marches. Instead, the hashtag seems to have given voice to the secluded silent.

The #MeToo movement is exposing a dark past (and present). Let's do what nurses do best: Advocate for a better future. Could we flood the media with ideas about how to counter the negativism and be the change we want to see? The idea came to me when I heard three great suggestions from a colleague: Pay close attention to how we (*all of us*) welcome new staff to the unit; during interprofessional training, teach physicians and other disciplines how to value nursing (what to say, what to do, how to contribute positively to a healthy work environment); and emphasize to nurses over and over and over again to not be intimidated. And if intimidation does occur, what to do.

What would happen if we focused more on what we're doing to change and not concentrate on the “it's awful, what happened” scenario? The #MeToo movement has shown us that massive impact is possible, if it's done together on a large scale. **#BeTheNursingChange** anyone?

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