

# New nursing school graduates: Let the real learning begin

Education continues on the job.



**WELCOME** to the 2021 class of nursing school graduates joining our most remarkable profession. You enter the workforce at an unusual time. During the past year, we've survived a fearsome pandemic and emerged with valuable insights. What do these lessons mean for new graduates? What can you expect as you start your new career, whether in acute care, post-acute care, or ambulatory care?

First, you already know that the pandemic isn't over and we're still figuring out how to deal with its impact on healthcare, our profession, and our workplaces. You've graduated from school, but you have a lot of experiential learning ahead of you.

Second, the world of nursing isn't quite the same as when you entered school. Patient, family, and community respect for the role and contributions of nurses continues to expand. Patient and staff safety protocols have evolved dramatically. In many states, nurses have been granted more leeway to practice at the top of their license. Technology's role in healthcare and nursing practice has evolved at a faster rate than ever projected, due to the rapidly evolving fields of genomics, telemedicine, machine learning, and artificial intelligence. What will these advancements mean for you? I predict exciting new care environments from which we'll all benefit.

Third, be prepared to give as much intellectual and emotional support to your colleagues as you hope to get from them. Your fellow nurses and all the other healthcare professionals you encounter have been engaged in a horrible battle that included too many losses of patients, fellow staff, and even their own family members. The profession has used the term "resilience" for many years. As you enter the workforce, study and practice the self-help tools available to help

you build your own resilience, so you can be strong for yourself, your colleagues, your patients, and your family. Don't be afraid to ask for help.

Last, many things haven't changed. Dedicated and compassionate nurses will surround you (they all once walked in your shoes), and your task is to learn as much as you can from them. Play a direct role in helping your team make changes for the better. The pandemic spawned the catch phrase, "We will get through this together." Going forward, know that you're not alone in any challenge you face. You're stronger as an involved and committed member of your team.

Welcome to the nursing profession. Now that you've graduated, let your real learning begin.

Lillie Gelinas, MSN, RN, CPPS, FAAN  
Editor-in-Chief

*American Nurse Journal's* Annual Education and Career Guide is designed to help new and experienced nurses grow in their careers. This year, you can read about trending career opportunities, transitioning from acute care to the community setting, certificate programs, the nurse practitioner role, and much more. Access the guide at [myamericannurse.com/category/advisor-series/education-advisor/](https://myamericannurse.com/category/advisor-series/education-advisor/).

