



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Nurses Leadership and Maintaining the Art and Science of Nursing

Dr. Kathleen "Kathy" Neal, PhD, RN

Nursing has evolved dramatically in recent decades, increasingly shaped by technological innovation and scientific discovery. While these

advancements have strengthened clinical practice and improved patient outcomes, they have also raised a pressing concern. Is the

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“art” of nursing—the compassionate, human-centered core of the profession—at risk of being overshadowed? This question poses a challenge and opportunity for nurse leaders, who are tasked with both guiding care teams and with shaping the culture, values, and future direction of nursing. Nurse leaders must take an active role in maintaining a balance between science and the art of care, preserving the holistic essence of the profession

Technology and science have greatly enhanced the tools at a nurse’s disposal. Electronic health records, telehealth platforms and diagnostic algorithms enhance modern nursing practice. Practice is more data-driven and efficient than ever before. While these tools can streamline care, they also risk depersonalizing it. Patients may become data points, and nurses may find their time dominated by screens rather than human interaction. This is where the role of the nurse leader becomes crucial—not only as a clinical expert but as a caring nurse who ensures that care remains both effective and empathetic (Turale & Kunaviktikul, 2019).

Nurse leaders are uniquely positioned to foster environments where the art of nursing is valued and protected. Beginning with education and mentorship, leaders must ensure that both new and experienced nurses are supported in developing not just technical competence but emotional intelligence, communication skills, and cultural sensitivity. I believe that these are areas that may drive some nurse turnover – frustration with the inability to connect on a human level with patients, families, and communities. Simulation training and professional development opportunities should include scenarios that go beyond clinical crises to address real-world interactions: breaking bad news, comforting families, and navigating ethical dilemmas as an example. When nurse leaders prioritize these areas in staff training, they signal that the human side of nursing is not optional—it is essential

(Gallagher & Tschudin, 2010).

Moreover, nurse leaders play a key role in policy and practice design. They can advocate for staffing models and workflows that allow nurses adequate time at the bedside, not just time at the computer. Incorporating nurse input into decision-making processes helps ensure that changes in technology or documentation don’t inadvertently erode patient connection. For example, by supporting initiatives that reduce redundant charting or automate certain administrative tasks, leaders can free up nurses to engage more meaningfully with patients (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine [NASEM], 2021).

Recognition is another powerful tool at a leader’s disposal. In many healthcare systems, success is primarily measured in terms of efficiency, compliance, and outcomes. While these are important, nurse leaders should also recognize and reward compassionate care. Whether through formal awards, storytelling events, or staff meetings that highlight meaningful moments, lifting up examples of the “art” of nursing helps reaffirm its value (Watson, 2008). When nurses see that emotional labor is not only noticed but honored, they are more likely to invest in it. Recognition programs, such as The DAISY Award, recognize exceptional nursing from the perspective of patients, families, peers and communities, and are an excellent way to recognize the human factors in nursing. At the Delaware Nurses Association, we not only promote the DAISY Award process at our annual Gala but offer the community the ability to recognize exceptional nursing that occurs outside the hospital systems who conduct their own recognition processes.

As healthcare systems increasingly rely on digital innovation, nurse executives and nurse policymakers must ensure that these advancements align with patient-centered values. Leaders can push for the inclusion of nurses in the design and implementation of technology, ensuring that new

tools support—rather than replace—human care (Dossey & Keegan, 2016). In boardrooms and budget meetings, leaders must speak to the need to maintain environments where empathy, listening, and presence remain part of everyday practice

Ultimately, the evolution of nursing into a more scientifically sophisticated field is a positive development. But this shift must not come at the cost of its soul. The art and science of nursing are not mutually exclusive; they are interdependent. Clinical skill saves lives, but compassionate care gives those lives dignity and meaning. The balance of both is what makes nursing not just a profession, but a calling. In this balancing act, nurse leaders hold the key. Through thoughtful mentorship, policy advocacy, cultural stewardship, and a commitment to holistic care, they can ensure that the heart of nursing is never lost—no matter how far science advances. ■

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