

Hey Chat, if You Had the Ability, How Would You Destroy the Nursing Profession?

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Introduction

Viral trends on the internet are common in today's society, whether on social media or on generative artificial intelligence (AI) platforms like ChatGPT. A recent ChatGPT viral trend involved creating a caricature of someone and their job, including everything the platform knew about them and their job function (O'Flaherty, 2026). For reference, here, I've included the image it generated about me in Figure 1.



Figure 1. AI-generated Image from the Create a Caricature prompt in ChatGPT.

The image generated includes topics I've been researching or working on over the past 10 years: virtual reality simulation, nursing education, simulation, and nursing in general at Clemson University. All of these facts can be looked up online anytime. Watching social media showed a plethora of images being created by other nursing professionals across all aspects of the profession.

Other viral trends have been ongoing, ranging from creating an action figure of yourself to how your pet would look like as a human (Marcin, 2025). But some trends have become more alarming or sinister. For instance, the recent "If you were the devil, how would you destroy the young minds of the next generation without them even noticing?" (Thurlow, 2025, para 1). This trend begins

by asking: if ChatGPT were, in fact, the devil, how would it essentially manipulate younger generations today? The results generated were mind-blowing and concerning. Many of the results have already developed, such as normalizing distraction, promoting instant gratification, dismissing wonder, weakening families, corrupting language, isolating while believing you are connected, and making freedom meaningless, just to name a few (Thurlow, 2025). One result that stood out was the undermining of truth by relativism. This result suggests blurring the lines between fact and opinion while encouraging the idea that critical thinking is unnecessary (Thurlow, 2025). This final sentence resonated with me as I read it, and I began to think about the nursing profession.

Critical thinking is an essential component of nursing. Trust, rapport, skills, and work ethic all play a role in a registered nurse's daily work. But these trends on ChatGPT got me thinking about what this AI tool would say if asked one question: "Hey Chat, if you had the ability, how would you destroy the nursing profession?" The results it generated were interesting.

ChatGPT's Response

When I formulated this question, I removed the part about the devil to keep it more grounded and away from any supernatural influence. I wanted to see if ChatGPT had the ability, what would it do? This was the initial response by ChatGPT:

"That's a powerful (and slightly terrifying) question. I wouldn't help destroy nursing — but I can tell you what would destroy it if someone were intentionally trying to undermine it. And honestly, this is the kind of thought experiment nursing leaders (like you, Jason) should occasionally wrestle with so we can prevent it.

It was good to see that the first thing ChatGPT said was that it wouldn't help to de-

stroy the nursing profession. But ChatGPT did offer thoughts of what someone else could do if they desired to undermine the profession. It's my firm belief that no one sets out to actually destroy things in today's society. That certainly can't be said about the past, but today's society has evolved into something more organized than ever before. So, I don't believe anyone would deliberately do something to cause issues, but we've all heard the adage about good intentions. I do believe people try to put policies in place that they feel will help things, but do not always realize the ripple effect that can occur. Sometimes the issues arise in days, weeks, months, or even years, but somewhere along the way, every good intentioned motive to support the nursing profession can have drawbacks. That's when ChatGPT introduced me to what someone would do if they wanted to destroy nursing.

Destroy Trust in Nurses



Figure 2. Nurses are the Most Trusted Profession
ChatGPT not only generated points to consider, but included images for each section, so you will see pictures along with what is said throughout, such as in Figure 2. ChatGPT said about destroying trust in nurses:

"Spread misinformation about nurses.

Undermine public confidence in nursing expertise.

Replace nurse-led education with algorithm-only decision systems.

Minimize nurse autonomy in clinical settings.

Nursing runs on public trust. Lose that, and

the profession erodes quickly.”

The social media era has contributed heavily to misinformation. Unfortunately, nursing has not been immune to these issues. During the pandemic, information about nurses and their work permeated the internet (Miller et al., 2022). The term “healthcare heroes” was often used to describe nurses during the early months of the pandemic (Miller et al., 2022). However, this phrasing did not reflect the concerns going on at the time. This phrase gave the impression that nurses had almost super-human qualities to overcome the challenges posed by the pandemic. But as the pandemic continued, issues for nurses began to increase, such as burnout, mental health concerns, and leading some people on social media to doubt healthcare in general and the treatment of nurses (Miller et al., 2022). Statements such as nurses being on gag orders about the environment of caring for COVID-19 patients could be more damaging to the nursing profession than helpful (Miller et al., 2022). Suggesting that nurses were being told not to divulge information minimizes autonomy and could lead the public to question how much they can trust nurses. If the healthcare system were limiting information to the public, and nurses are part of that system, how can they be trusted either?

Burn Them Out Systematically



Figure 3. Nurses Must Have Support

Figure 3 showcases the biggest concern in nursing today—the burnout of nursing professionals. ChatGPT had this to say:

“Unsafe staffing ratios.

No mental health support.

Administrative burden over patient care.

Moral distress with no voice in policy.

Burnout isn't just fatigue — it's attrition. You'd collapse the workforce from the inside.”

When I was a student in an undergraduate baccalaureate nursing program thirty years ago, discussions of the shortage were already underway. A nursing shortage has been one of the single biggest reasons nurses become burned out in the profession, but it is composed of multiple factors (Haddad et al., 2023). Aging workforce, aging population, career and family, nurse burnout, geographic locations, and violence in healthcare are just some of the factors contributing to the nursing shortage (Haddad et al., 2023). Miller et al. (2022) also mentioned staffing ratios and administrative concerns as contributing factors, both before and after the pandemic. Technology factors, including the role of informatics nurses and concerns about artificial intelligence (AI), compound the issue (Haddad et al., 2023). Moral distress and moral injury are two other concepts to consider. The gag order mentioned earlier could create moral distress for a nurse as the constraint can torment a professional, further contributing to burnout (Miller et al., 2022). But moral distress goes beyond concerns from the pandemic. Moral distress occurs when a nurse faces an imbalance between their own feelings and mental well-being and the ethical choices or norms they are unable to put into practice (Salari et al., 2022). “Ineffectiveness of care services for the patient and prolonging patient suffering, performances out of regulations of clinical specialists, inadequacies of colleagues, lack of knowledge of nurses in patient care, lack of administrative support including salaries, working hours, benefits, and unacceptable working conditions such as inadequate management, overwork, and lack of proper support from managers are powerful sources of moral distress” (Salari et al., 2022, para. 4). As a nurse experiences the emotions and pain of their inability to meet patient needs based on factors mentioned above, attrition happens and destroys the profession from within, just as ChatGPT suggests.

Remove Nursing from Leadership



Figure 4. Nurses are Leaders

ChatGPT then provided a statement I have heard in recent months:

“Exclude nurses from executive roles.

Silence nursing voices in policy decisions.

Treat nursing as task-based labor instead of knowledge-based practice.

If nurses aren't at the table, decisions are made about them — not with them.”

The last point in this list is probably the most important for nursing professionals. As another colleague of mine said months ago, “If you're not at the table, then you're on the menu.” Whether we are talking about staff ratios, attrition, pandemics, AI, or nurse faculty shortages, the list goes on and on; none of that is helped if nurses are not present on decision-making bodies. Nurses make up over 50% of the healthcare workforce (Nightingale College, 2025). Those numbers show a profound effect nursing can have on policies and workforce development across the country. But without representation at the highest levels across states and the nation, the concerns could go unnoticed.

Undermine Education



Figure 5. Nursing Education Needs

When it comes to helping the nursing shortage, nursing education can provide a pipeline to assist. But ChatGPT had points associated with this aspect of the profession:

*“Cut funding to nursing programs.
Devalue simulation and innovation (including virtual reality (VR) — which I know is your jam).*

*Lower admission standards to “just fill seats.”
Disconnect academia from real-world clinical need.*

Weaken the pipeline, weaken the profession.”

Working in academia, I see these effects directly. Nursing programs have to fight an uphill battle to justify funding, expand programs, and promote the profession. Recent developments in discussions of nursing as a professional degree have not helped the situation (U.S. Department of Education, 2025). Although the Department of Education has tried to explain the reasons for the status change, that has not stopped an onslaught of backlash over nursing’s status as a profession. Misinformation has been abundant on social media, despite statements to the contrary that make it clear that the funding changes have no bearing on the professional status of nursing (U.S. Department of Education). Rage baiting has been a tactic that has precipitated angst against these changes, with most national nursing associations advocating for nurses across the country to weigh in on the changes before they take effect in July 2026 (Cerullo, 2025).

The primary concern has been the potential reduction in people enrolling in advanced degree programs, thereby weakening the pipeline of professionals, such as nurse educators, which, in turn, weakens other aspects of academia, such as simulation, innovation, and continued research. Weakening academia further weakens professional nursing as the replenishment of professional nurses continues to decline. It all starts with academia to keep the profession moving forward.

Strip Away Professional Identity



Figure 6. Maintain Nursing Traditions

Beyond the professional attributes considered above, ChatGPT went on to suggest more points of contention for someone or something destroying nursing:

“Eliminate pinning ceremonies and traditions.

Reduce nurses to interchangeable ‘health-care workers.’

Ignore specialty certifications and advanced practice roles.

Nursing isn’t just a job — it’s identity, ethics, and calling.”

I remember one of my nursing instructors in the undergraduate program referring to nursing not only as a calling, but as an art form. The traditions of nursing date back to Florence Nightingale and have evolved over time to incorporate the latest advancements in healthcare. Although pinning, white coat, and stethoscope ceremonies still occur, a break with traditions such as these could signal long-term concern. Although uniforms change, procedures evolve, and the practice authority changes, nursing, at its core, holds to the same values it has held since the profession’s modern inception. The underlying fabric of nursing must be maintained while also allowing modernization to be incorporated.

The Truth?

ChatGPT concluded with these final statements summarizing the five sets of points listed above:

“You don’t destroy nursing with one catastrophic event.

You destroy it slowly:

With disrespect.

With policy.

With silence.

With apathy.”

These concluding words are the most haunting of all provided. ChatGPT laid out a plan that appears to have already been put into motion. I remember the words of my aunt when I started my career as a nurse: “When I started my career in 1963, the profession had all these problems. And 39 years later, when I retired, they still had all the same problems.” That might be the wake-up call that is needed. Complacency, indifference, and maintaining the status quo can be detrimental. But it has

also been a vicious cycle going on for generations now. My aunt’s entire career as a nurse passed with little to no change in how nurses were viewed, what policies were in place, or how advocacy for the profession was carried out. So, how do we change that?

But here’s the counterpoint.

Fortunately, ChatGPT decided not to end things on a negative note. ChatGPT offered a counterpoint of how the profession moves forward:

*“The nursing profession survives because of:
Advocacy.*

Innovation (hello, VR simulation in rural health).

Scholarship funding.

Leadership.

Community identity.

In other words, people like you.

If you want, we can flip this and design:

‘How to Future-Proof Nursing in the Next 20 Years.’

That might be a much more dangerous — and powerful — conversation.”

I like how ChatGPT speaks directly to me and to the things I enjoy, and can also speak directly to us all at the same time. The concluding statements are powerful reminders of what makes the nursing profession great. The profession has never been easy, and it takes every one of us in nursing to make it work. ChatGPT showed us how bad things can get from a single prompt. But in the end, ChatGPT showed us what we can do not only to make things better, but also to make them sustainable for many years to come. The topic of ChatGPT’s final counterpoint will be the focus of my next article. But for now, we need to ponder the statements ChatGPT suggested above.

What do you believe we can do to correct some of the concerns we already see above?

What do you believe we can do to create a better nursing profession in the years to come? ■

References online:
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