



**All across the United States, registered nurses are being saluted.**

On May 6, 2005, Rinker and Associates joins the American Nurses Association in celebrating **National RN Recognition Day**, as part of National Nurses Week, which is held May 6-12, every year. The purpose of **National RN Recognition Day** is to raise awareness of the value of nursing and help educate the public about the role nurses play in meeting the health care needs of the American people.

In honor of the dedication, commitment, and tireless effort of the nearly 2.7 million registered nurses nationwide to promote and maintain the health of this nation, the ANA and Rinker and Associates are proud to recognize registered nurses everywhere on this particular day for the quality work they provide seven days a week, 365 days a year.

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Rekindling a Dying Flame – By Lorraine Rinker (April 28, 2005)

*Dedicated to Elaine and All Registered Nurses Everywhere*

My mother and grand-mother were nurses, so was my mother-in-law. One would have thought I might have naturally followed in my mother's and grand-mother's footsteps and become a nurse - - but, no - - I took an alternate route. Nonetheless, I find the healthcare industry intriguing— and I have tremendous respect for the practitioners within the healthcare industry, particularly nurses who possess an intense and compelling passion for their work.

During the past ten years I have met extraordinary nurses who, like my mother, grand-mother and mother-in-law, were as passionate about their work as they were compassionate of their patients. Where are these nurses today? I managed to meet many of them a year ago in a local ICU where my youngest brother spent his last days fighting lung cancer.

The overall care my brother received during his stay in ICU was exemplary and nothing short of the excellence the medical institution was (and still is) committed to providing its patients. Yes, I am forever grateful for the doctors who kept me informed well enough to maintain a balance between hope and reality. But, it was the nurses (RNs) that kept me grounded. I am thankful for veteran nurses like Marcia whose eyes welled up as she explained how much she loved her job; and Maureen, who found a way to cheer my brother up by moving him to a room with a sunny window. I am even thankful for veteran nurses like Karin who was brave enough to answer my question about “why” my brother's vitals were “the way they were”, by saying “because he's dying”. And, I am especially thankful for Gary, the nurse assigned to care for my brother that last evening back in February 2004. He was nothing short of an “angel” in his assistance to me and my family in the last few hours of my brother's life.

I can't help but wonder what the future will be like for these wonderful nurses. How long can they keep this demanding pace while maintaining a high quality of care? What keeps them going - - where is their support infrastructure, their mentors, their continuing motivation for rekindling an internal flame that is burning out? More importantly, where is the next generation of such passionate nurses?

They are right in the trenches today - - and they need to be groomed for the future and in place long before this generation of wonderful nurses finally gets a well-deserved break and joins the world of retirement.

Nursing requires a fine balance between technical and personal skills; and those who have maintained careers spanning 20 or 30 years did so in possession of that balance. "Caring for a patient as a whole will have an impact on the nursing profession in the future", says Darby Isenberg, a passionate 30 year healthcare professional with extensive experience in multiple phases of nursing. "Doing this job day after day requires nurses to utilize their caring and nurturing skills and possess the ability to touch someone. If you can't do that, then you're not in the right profession." Ms. Isenberg also explained the need for exceptional communication skills by saying, "Nurses need to utilize both verbal and non-verbal communication queues during the patient assessment process. To be effective requires you to have a passion for caring for the patient as a person."

Building strong technical skills for nurses begins with the most effective training and education. As one of the finest medical teaching institutions in Northern California, U.C. Davis Medical School continues to set a high standard in education. Additionally, healthcare organizations are stepping up their educational involvement by partnering with programs for nurses and other healthcare professionals. For instance, Sutter Health partnered with Sacramento City College (SCC) to expand SCC's Associate Degree Nursing Program in order to serve more students and launched its inaugural program in the fall of 2003.

Because formal education is not the only significant learning forum to impact the success of up and coming nurses, many healthcare organizations maintain internal leadership development and mentoring programs for its staff. According to another veteran RN with Sutter Medical Center in Sacramento, "most of what you really learn as a new nurse is on the job, through relationships between the inexperienced nurse and the veteran counterpart. Those relationships need to be built with open lines of communication in order for knowledge to be shared. The experience a new nurse has during orientation makes all the difference in whether that person will develop and maintain a passion for their work in the long run."

Knowing that passionate healthcare professionals will be there to provide high quality health care for many years to come, is something I personally hope for. If there continues to be dedicated real world development of the professional nurse (along with an effective and supportive infrastructure), there just may be enough fuel to keep a dying flame lit for the next generation.

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