



READERS REQUEST THEIR OWN CRITICAL CARE NURSE

If you were critically ill, which of your critical care nurse colleagues would you want assigned to your care?

I posed this question to readers a few months ago¹ to stimulate both thoughtful reflection as well as more than tacit recognition that some of us are truly fortunate to work with nurses who epitomize the best in our specialty area. The purpose of raising the question was to move beyond merely acknowledging that a peer is knowledgeable and/or skilled. Although acknowledgments of that nature surely need to be communicated more often than they are, the more immediate impetus was to personalize this distinction so that it reflected the critical care nurse into whose head, heart, and hands you would want your welfare placed.

In addition to that first question, the editorial also asked readers to explain why they requested that particular nurse and, lastly, which attribute of that nurse most influenced their selection. A copy of the "Request for Patient Assignment" appeared with the editorial. Readers then needed to go online to the *Critical Care Nurse* Web site to submit their request for participation in the survey by January 15 of this year. In addition, they could print a copy of their request so they could personally deliver it.

We received 29 sets of replies to these questions, suggesting that our December issue, which arrives in the midst of the annual holiday season, may not be the opportune time to solicit survey participation. Despite the limited number of participants, however, the respect and admiration revealed in their sentiments are at once touching (in case you thought no one noticed how well

you do your critical care nurse thing), inspirational (in case you aspire to one day earn this level of applaud among your peers), and clear (in case you wondered whether the set of important attributes is readily identifiable).

We promised to publish selected results of the survey anonymously, so I'd like to share some of those thoughts here, beginning with the reasons why that particular critical care nurse was requested and then the attribute that most influenced the request for that nurse.

Why I Want Nancy, Joan, Amy, Jan, Liz, Elaine, etc, to Be My Critical Care Nurse

I invite you to read the following commentaries that explain why survey respondents requested the nurse they named. (Selected replies have been edited for anonymity and brevity. All comments received referred to female nurses.)

- She is patient and hardworking, a patient advocate, who shares her wealth of experience with fellow nurses. She keeps up to date with the latest interventions in critical care. She is lighthearted, has a good sense of humor, and always makes her patients smile and her coworkers laugh. She is a very good preceptor and is always patient with orientees' transition to the unit. She has a way about her that makes patients and families trust her way of caring.
- She is clinically skilled and truly cares about her patients; she knows it is just as important to titrate vasopressors as it is to comb their hair and hold their hand.

Not surprisingly, they seek a caring, competent, compassionate nurse who will advocate for them at all times... Be one of them!

- She is caring, open, and honest. In a crisis, she is reassuring and remains calm, but acts quickly.
- She has more skills and education than anyone I know. She risks her life to help others, unbuckling her seatbelt mid air in a helicopter to start CPR! And she thinks it's fun. She has taught me that nurses are a twisted, different breed, but thank God for her.
- She never ceases to amaze me with her compassion for others and the dedicated care she delivers to her patients every day without fail. Her personality is like sunshine; even if you were having a bad day, her personality warms you and makes you smile. She is like my little sister. I love her and trust her completely.
- She is the most compassionate, caring, skilled, and knowledgeable RN I have known in 20 plus years. She takes time to understand the disease processes and takes nothing for granted. She is a patient advocate, effective charge nurse, and all around wonderful human being. Many of our staff have submitted requests to have her assigned to them, if need be, and their faith in her is justified.
- She evaluates minute by minute, changes care to fit patient needs, chases physicians to get the orders she needs, and maintains good relationships with other departments so that when her patient needs something, it is cheerfully forthcoming. She remains current so her patients get the latest and best; she is always, always their advocate, day after day.
- She is an expert cardiovascular surgical RN with a work ethic that meets the needs of patients and staff. She has a dry sense of humor and though she has slowed down over the past 17 years, she continues to provide excellent patient care. Send her my way or to my family if we need care.
- She is the most caring nurse I know. She would not let me get bedsores, would answer my lights in a timely manner, and force me to do what I need to get discharged.
- She lends a helping hand in any situation, works as an advocate for her patients, and is a great team member.
- She is the nurse who everyone goes to for advice and always has a smile on her face. Her patient care is the best no matter how difficult her assignment.
- Although her outstanding clinical skills are what other nurses aspire to, it is her intense caring, compassionate heart, attention to detail, and outstanding communication skills that make her my choice.
- She demonstrates over and over the ability to deliver competent, professional care regardless of the circumstances and always with a positive attitude.
- She embodies the true meaning of a nurse, including the qualities of compassion and empathy—traits that are inborn with some, learned by others, and sadly absent in some nurses.
- She is accurate and thorough, kind, pleasant, compassionate, and keeps the patient as the number one priority. She has a way of making one smile and forget his or her worries. She helps others even before they ask.
- She is a powerhouse of knowledge and skill packed into a tiny person. Very organized, able to keep her cool during a code, and her soft and sweet demeanor are just a few of the qualities that make her an exceptional nurse.
- She is a highly skilled critical care nurse with a wonderful personality (and giggle) that can make even the most chaotic moments better. She is a joy to work with.
- I know that she will do the best job and will also do what is in my best interest.
- She combines her vast knowledge with deep care and concern for her patients, their families and her coworkers. Patients and families remember her and ask that she be their nurse. Supervisors seek her out to care for patients or families in difficult situations. When she is on, all will be well and everything will be in order. After 30 plus years as a nurse, I want a nurse who is competent and respectful and who cares for me as a human being. I want her.
- She manages our sickest patients with skill and confidence and has an amazing ability to communicate with patients and families. She goes above and beyond for patients and shares her knowledge and experience with her fellow nurses. She is the first nurse I would entrust to care for me or my family.
- I believe that all of our nurses are competent, compassionate, and would do what is right for me or my family.
- I am requesting one of the pillars of our unit who comes not just with a wealth of knowledge, but with a caring heart that always advocates for her patients.

Her calm demeanor enables her to think and act under any type of pressure. She listens to her patient's concerns and can soothe the most anxious patient. In today's fast-paced and often impersonal health care system, she finds a way to give great care from the best place of all, her heart.

- She is one of the most knowledgeable and caring nurses I have ever known. If something needs to be done for a patient's care or safety, she does it. She always has a smile on her face and a kind word for her patients.
- Not only is she extremely knowledgeable, but she would stand her ground for my sake. She would be diligent in my physical care, ensure that I am bathed with clean linens, and do whatever was necessary to make me comfortable. If all else in modern medicine failed, she would help me to die with dignity and grace.

Which of This Critical Care Nurse's Attributes Most Influenced the Request?

In an attempt to further narrow the list of attributes that contributed to selection of a particular nurse, we asked readers to identify the attribute that most influenced their request for that nurse. Although many respondents offered multiple rather than single replies, the frequency with which a particular attribute was mentioned was easy to discern.

Top 5 attributes that influenced request (in order of frequency):

- Caring
- Patient advocacy
- Compassionate
- Knowledgeable
- Competence

Attributes mentioned twice:

- Calm demeanor
- Commitment
- Kindness
- Positive, hopeful
- Team player

Attributes mentioned once:

- Empathy
- Good listener
- Honesty

- Leadership
- Sincerity

Although this information was afforded by a tiny sample of *Critical Care Nurse* readers, it rather strikingly provides a clear vision of what critical care nurses most want of "their nurse" should they ever enter the double doors of their own unit as a patient. Not surprisingly, they seek a caring, competent, compassionate nurse who will advocate for them at all times and under all circumstances, regardless of the weight of their own workload or of the patient's final outcome. Those are the colleagues these readers admire. Those are the nurses they want assigned to their care. Be one of them.

Reference

1. Alspach JG. If I am ever critically ill, I want _ to be my nurse. *Crit Care Nurse*. 2007;27(6):8,11.



Grif Alspach, RN, MSN, EdD
Editor

Corrections

The authors of the Creative Solutions poster CS179, "The Role of a Critical Care Nurse in the Organization and Management of an Early ICU Mobility Team" (published online only in NTI Abstracts, April 2008), have withdrawn their poster.