

IF I AM EVER CRITICALLY ILL, I WANT ___ TO BE MY NURSE

Critical care nurses often lament that they are not recognized or appreciated for their contributions to patient care.¹ In addition to their report that healthcare management often fails to respect their knowledge, experience, and hard work, nurses also decry the hostility some receive from their colleagues and coworkers.² Together, these peer and organizational factors can wreck havoc on staff morale, erase job satisfaction, and, over time, influence nurses' decision to leave their practice and their profession.^{1,3}

For this editorial, I would like to take a timeout from that rather discouraging discourse and propose that each of us spend a little time creating an alternative mindset by pondering the following question:

If I were critically ill, which one of my critical care nurse colleagues would I want to be "My Nurse?"

I'll bet that it did not take you very long to decide which nurse you would most want assigned to care for you. Was it almost an instantaneous decision? Or did it require some serious contemplation because you are blessed with a number of competent, caring, and compassionate colleagues? In either case, I would not anticipate that this decision was either difficult or protracted. When it comes to issues related to our own survival, instinct typically affords a clarity that prolonged serial cogitation only clouds.

Despite the relative ease of that selection process, it may also be worthwhile to invest some additional time in reflecting on why that person so naturally emerges into the foreground among all members of the nursing staff. One benefit of

such reflection is that it can reveal insights as much about one's self as about the person selected as "My Nurse"—that is, the attributes of critical care nursing we most value at a core, personal level. In order to gain from this introspection, 2 additional questions need to be considered:

- Why would I want this colleague to be "My Nurse?"
- Among all the worthy attributes this nurse possesses, which one trait most influenced my selection of this nurse as "My Nurse?"

In these days when employee recognition programs can be packaged, diced into daily calendars, repackaged, produced, marketed, and disseminated globally via Internet and multimedia training, consulting, publishing, and lecturing about something dubbed a "carrot culture,"⁴ I cannot think of a more straightforward and elegant way for one critical care nurse to recognize another than by placing his or her life in the other's hands (and heart and mind).

So use this holiday season to prepare a "Request for Patient Assignment" to identify the critical care nurse you want assigned to your care and to explain your reasons for selecting that nurse. Use the sample request form (Figure) to spark your musings and then go to the *Critical Care Nurse* Web site (<http://ccn.aacnjournals.org>), click on the red link titled Request for Patient Assignment, and submit your request. Be sure to enter your request before January 15, 2008. *Critical Care Nurse* will compile the requests and select some to publish (anonymously). In order to convey your wishes to your

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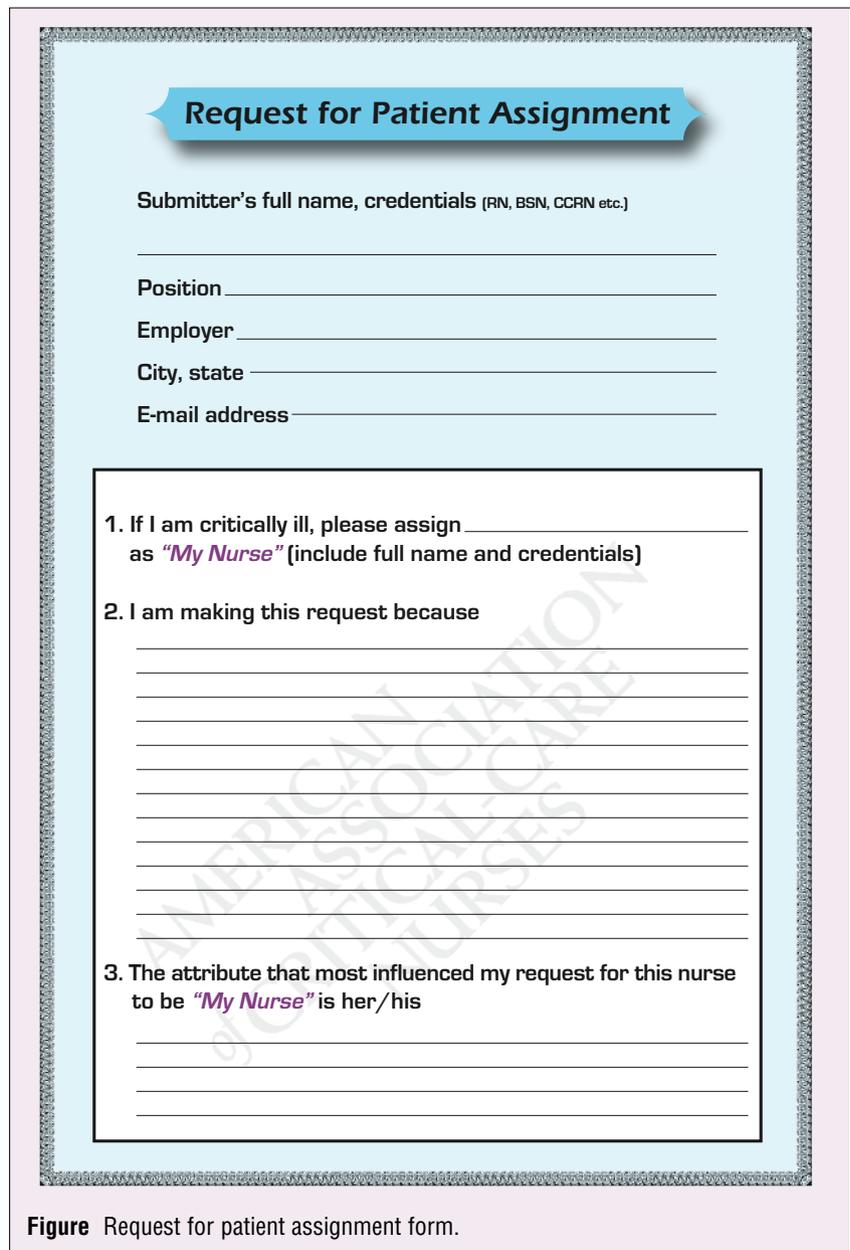
critical care nurse colleague, go to our Web site to access a printable version of the Figure.

References

1. Alspach JG. Critical care nurses as coworkers: Are our interactions nice or nasty? *Crit Care Nurse*. 2007;27(3):10,12-14.
2. Ulrich BT, Lavandero R, Hart KA, Woods D, Leggett J, Taylor D. Critical care nurses' work environments: a baseline status report. *Crit Care Nurse*. 2006;26(5):46-50, 52-57.
3. Ulrich BT, Woods D, Hart KA, Lavandero R, Leggett J, Taylor D. Critical care nurses' work environments: value of excellence in Beacon units and magnet organizations. *Crit Care Nurse*. 2007;27(3):68-77.
4. Carrot Culture. <http://www.carrots.com>. Accessed October 1, 2007.



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The form is titled "Request for Patient Assignment" in a blue banner. It contains several sections for text entry:

- Submitter's full name, credentials (RN, BSN, CCRN etc.)** _____
- Position** _____
- Employer** _____
- City, state** _____
- E-mail address** _____

Below these fields is a large rectangular box containing three numbered questions:

1. If I am critically ill, please assign _____ as **"My Nurse"** (include full name and credentials)
2. I am making this request because

3. The attribute that most influenced my request for this nurse to be **"My Nurse"** is her/his

A large, faint watermark "AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF CRITICAL CARE NURSES" is visible across the form.

Figure Request for patient assignment form.