

You have probably heard that there is a nursing shortage. Presently, there are over 100,000 vacant positions in nursing and if current trends continue, the projected shortage by 2020 is 800,000 (www.discovernursing.com). The U.S. Department of Labor states that “employment of registered nurses is expected to grow much faster than average for all occupations.” For licensed practical nurses, employment is expected to grow about as fast as average in hospitals and faster than average in many health care industries outside the traditional hospital setting (www.dol.gov). The availability and security of employment may be the draw for some, but there are even better reasons to make nursing your chosen profession. They are; the wide variety of **choices** within nursing itself, the opportunity to **challenge** yourself, and the ability to make **changes** that improve people’s lives.

If you think that becoming a nurse means answering call bells and emptying bed pans in a hospital for the rest of your life, think again. As a nurse, you will have many **choices** as to what kind of nursing you will do and in what type of setting. Just a few examples are case management, home health, neuroscience, parish, surgery, transplant or trauma nursing. Other areas of nursing that you may not have thought of are community health, domestic violence, forensics, informatics, research, substance abuse, advocacy and mission or refugee nursing (www.discovernursing.com).

Because nurses are in high demand, you will also have choices about where and when to work. Look in almost any nursing journal and you will see plenty of hospitals or health care organizations trying to recruit you with promises of competitive salaries and benefits, sign on bonuses, tuition support or reimbursement, immediate openings and flexible schedules. Many ads for travel nursing show a picturesque scene on a tropical

beach of nurses relaxing in the sun on their time off. Be forewarned however. Nursing is not for the idle of heart. The journey of both becoming and being a nurse is filled with **challenges** and that is precisely another reason to choose it. In nursing school, you will need to work and study diligently to prepare yourself for your career. Each day on the job will require the best you have to give. If you are willing to take on the challenge, you will learn more than you ever thought possible, not only about nursing and medicine, but about yourself as well. You will grow in confidence as you become more proficient in your skills and in fulfillment as you serve others through your nursing care – which brings us to the third reason to choose nursing: the ability to **change** yourself, others and your world for the better. As you provide holistic nursing care, whatever the setting, you improve the lives of others. In spite of all the choices, challenges and benefits, this service to others is the best reason to choose nursing, because herein lies life's highest purpose and fulfillment.