

I frequently have the opportunity to interact individually and with groups of students who are in high school, college, advanced degree programs, nursing school and even medical school. One of the important topics that arises is the value of nursing as a career. This topic is certainly important to the perspective nurse (currently, who may be considering the nursing profession as a second career) but is equally important to those who are and will be patients—everyone! Several aspects of the profession should be highlighted for consideration.

Nursing offers a unique opportunity for **holistic care** that embraces a bio-psychosocial model. While many people have the mistaken impression that nurses only care for a patient's physical needs, modern nursing embraces the emotional and social environment as well. Effective nurses have skills in scientific practice and thought, but also are artisans in assessment, communication, and compassionate care.

Patient **empowerment** is emphasized through education and behavior change. In offices, hospitals, clinics and other venues, patients are taught to be effective health care consumers. Patients share information and set goals with nurses even when they are intimidated by other professionals. Educating clients about self-care issues such as smoking cessation, safer sex, family planning, nutrition, exercise, and personal safety has a tremendous impact on both the individual's well-being and the societal costs associated with health care.

The focus of nursing intervention is on **function**. Every level of a nursing care plan analyzes and addresses how the patient can be most healthy and able to perform at their best. This area also has a tremendous impact on both lowering the costs of both health care and raising the capacity of people to contribute to society. At the same time, function builds the patient's sense of personal capacity and has an incredible impact on one's self-efficacy, emotional health, and subsequent physical health.

These three areas of nursing attract the very best and brightest students to the nursing profession. They are so vital and challenging that they may also intimidate individuals who may fear they simply cannot live up to the standards of the profession. Students should also be encouraged that the profession offers tremendous support and camaraderie to develop and continuously hone these vital areas. Other professionals can feel confident that the modern nurse is a highly skilled team member, and health care consumers benefit directly by the focus on holistic care, empowerment, and return to function.