Nurses in some way touch the lives of most every human being. They are there at birth, through illness, recovery and loss. They participate in some of the most difficult and intimate experiences people ever face. 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, nurses are managing and delivering care to patients and their families, yet most people know very little about the realities of nursing.

Throughout history the role of nursing has evolved. The contributions nurses make have expanded and their impact has grown. Nurses are often thought of as assistants to physicians but that is not the case. Nurses are highly trained professionals applying art, science, decision-making and leadership to the delivery of care. They are direct patient care providers, managers, executives, change agents, leaders, artists, writers, researchers, teachers, and policy makers. They walk the halls of Congress and they travel hours out dirt roads to care of the sick and injured.

This documentary offers a rare and intimate look into the world of nursing today. Over 100 years after Florence Nightingale spearheaded the modern nursing movement, this film explores the many different ways that nurses contribute to our society, how they touch the lives of individuals and how they change policies and practices to make the delivery of healthcare safer and more effective.

Over 70 nurses from different situations talk openly about their experiences and feelings. From cutting edge medical centers to the vast open space of an Indian Reservation and an inner city nurse run clinic, this film helps one understand the work of nursing, what it feels like to be a nurse and how nurses are impacted by the challenging work that they do.

This guide is designed to optimize the experience of this film and help students look deeply into the world of nursing, to expand understanding of what nurses do, and to expel myths and grow appreciation for the roles nurses play in society.

A Critical Time in Healthcare

Healthcare in the United States is undergoing tremendous change and transformation. Debates are on-going from Congress to dinner tables across the country as this nation wrestles with the challenges we face in healthcare. There are many different views of how to respond to the healthcare needs of our populations while managing costs, quality and safety. As we struggle with these issues, having a strong understanding of the work of nursing will help bring the realities of patient care into the dialogue which can only help move healthcare in the right direction.
Discussions to Consider

- What did you learn about Nursing?
- What surprised you about Nursing?
- What characteristics did you notice are common among nurses who work in very different settings and in different roles?
- Describe what you observed about the relationships between nurses and their patients/family members.
  - Discuss the benefits to patients and their families.
  - Discuss the impact on nurse’s lives.
  - Discuss the difficulties nurses may face in these relationships.
- What did you observe about the emotional aspects of being a nurse?
- How do you think nurses cope with the tragedies, loss and sadness that are inherent in their jobs?
- What do you think happens when nurses give to others at the cost of their own health and wellbeing?
  Why do you think they might do that? What ideas do you have that would help nurses avoid long-term effects of giving beyond their capacity?
- What are some healthy ways that nurses can deal with the difficult aspects of their jobs?
- Why is compassion a fundamental characteristic for a nurse to have?
- Do you think Nurses should be at the policy table as healthcare reform is defined? If so, why? If not, why?

Inside the Stories

**John the Midwife**

When John went into nursing, he never imagined that he would choose to enter into Obstetrics (OB) and become a nurse midwife. During nursing school he was disappointed that he could not get the clinical rotation that he wanted. During his 6 week rotation in OB, John discovered a career path that lead to a long and fulfilling practice.

- What challenges do you think John faced in entering a female dominated practice area?
- How do you think patients respond to having a male in the role of nurse midwife?
- What can we learn from John’s story of discovering the focus of his career?
Karen – Needle Stick Injury

Karen was an emergency room nurse for over 20 years when she contracted HIV and Hepatitis C from a needle stick injury at work. Once she stabilized with her treatments she went on to campaign for and successfully get a law passed in Congress to provide safer devices to workers that help prevent needle stick injuries. Karen went on to become President of the American Nurses Association (ANA) where she continues to be a voice and work hard for nurses everywhere.

- How does it make you feel about nursing when you think about the risks that are inherent in the work they do?
- Why do you think people are willing to take on these risks?
- When you see the power of a unified voice for nurses and the kinds of changes they can inspire, what do you think about?
- A very small percent of nurses in this country are members of their professional organizations, why do you think that is?

Jonathan and Laurie – Impactful Relationships

Jonathan and Laurie met only once during an outpatient visit at the Chemotherapy Unit. During that encounter they had a conversation that changed the course of Jonathan’s life. Five years later, Laurie learned about how their conversation had impacted Jonathan, the changes he had made and that, inspired by her, he had become a nurse.

- Talk about the implications of how one conversation between and nurse and a patient can be so powerful that a patient changes their life or influences their decisions.
  - What are the benefits?
  - What are the risks?
- Discuss what it must be like for nurses to get so close to patients and their families and so often never know what happens to them.
- If nurses are given too many patients to care for and become too busy to sit down and talk with patients, how will the patient experience change? What are the short term and long term implications?
Learn More About Nursing

Discover Nursing: www.discovernursing.com

Some Nursing Associations

American Nurses Association: www.nursingworld.org
American Assembly for Men in Nursing: www.aamn.org
American Association of Ambulatory Nurses: www.aaacn.org
American Association of Colleges of Nursing: www.aacn.nche.edu
American Academy of Nursing: www.aannet.org
American Nurses Credentialing Center: www.nursecredentialing.org
American Organization of Nurse Leaders: www.aone.org
American Public Health Association: www.apha.org
Institute for Healthcare Improvement: www.ihi.org
Institute of Medicine of the National Academies of Practice: www.iom.edu
Minority Nurse: www.minoritynurse.com
National Student Nurses Association: www.nsna.org
National League of Nursing: www.nln.org
National Association for Healthcare Quality: www.nahq.org
National Quality Forum: www.qualityforum.org

See our website for a list of Journals in Nursing
www.wisewomancircles.com

About Wise Women Circles

Wise Women Circles is a women owed and operated production company. We are committed to creating films and supporting projects that promote awareness, expand understanding, and inspire individual or social change.