



**SAVE  
ONE  
LIFE,  
YOU  
ARE A  
HERO,  
SAVE  
100  
LIVES,  
YOU ARE  
A NURSE.**

**- ANONYMOUS**



# IAMA NURSE.

*By Mary Ellen Smith Glasgow, PhD, RN, ANEF, FAAN*

Every day on the news we see the enduring images of nurses providing critical care on the frontlines. COVID-19 has thrust health care providers into the spotlight. We will not soon forget the faces of exhausted nurses in protective gear, with cheeks bruised from tight masks, and eyes full of sorrow. We have witnessed their compassion as they comforted the sick and dying, connecting patients with family members via technology if possible, or stepping in to act as family if none could be present. But, we have also witnessed their

joy when a patient survives, seeing them cheer enthusiastically, saluting the discharged patient like a war-time hero.

As fate would have it, the World Health Organization has also designated 2020 as the “Year of the Nurse and Midwife,” marking the birth of Florence Nightingale, who established the principles of modern nursing and hospital sanitation, not knowing we would face a pandemic exactly 200 years later.

As most people across the globe ran away from COVID-19, nurses bravely ran toward it. We have heard from numerous Duquesne nursing alumni who had answered the call for nurses to help fight the rapid spread of COVID-19 this past spring. Among them was Diana Cook, RN, N’17. “I couldn’t sit at home when I saw the dire need for help continue to grow each day,” said Cook, who worked in a Manhattan hospital in one of the many COVID-19 ICUs. “I saw firsthand the exhausted staff and critically ill patients but also the incredible efforts of health care workers from all over the country who have come to work together during this pandemic. I am thankful for my education from Duquesne

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and the clinical experiences I have acquired in my time as a nurse thus far that have allowed me to help during this pandemic.”

The International Council of Nurses estimates that more than 230,000 health care workers have contracted COVID-19, of whom more than 600 have died. And while the coronavirus pandemic amplified the role of the nurse, members of our profession are working tirelessly every day in hospitals, long-term care and neighborhood settings to care for individuals, families and communities.

So what motivates nurses to wake up each morning and go to work, and in the time of COVID-19, at great risk to their own personal safety and that of their families? Nursing is a profession and a vocation. You enter the nursing profession out of a deep sense of service—wanting to heal the sick, abate suffering and preserve life. It is not glamorous or easy. In fact nursing is both intellectually challenging and physically demanding. On many days, it is also mentally and spiritually exhausting. But the rewards are plentiful; when you are a nurse, you have a job with real purpose, positively impacting the lives of those you serve.

Melissa Coulter, BSN, RN, N’15, an emergency department RN in Baltimore, Md., says, “I have been at the bedside of countless patients while we have tried everything in our power to keep them alive. I have seen the fear in patients’ eyes, I have held their hands as they realized they were dying, and I have been with patients as they take their final breaths.” Coulter says she never expected to be an emergency department RN during a pandemic, but she knows she is exactly where she is supposed to be.

Nurses make up nearly half of the world’s health care workforce—there are approximately 20 million nurses worldwide—and 90% of patients’ contact with health workers are with nurses.

They have stepped up during the COVID-19 pandemic as we would expect, not only as the nurse providing care 24/7 but also as the only human connection at times and the conduit between the family and the patient. Nurses have always been with patients during life’s most intimate moments—birth, suffering and death. COVID-19 has magnified this experience as patients cannot have visitors, leaving them alone and frightened. It is the nurse who is there at this moment. It is the nurse who will quietly speak to the patient, provide comfort, and allay pain and fear. Nurses have done this for 200 years, and 2020 is no different.

The Year of the Nurse and Midwife just reminds us again of the critical role nurse play in health care and society. I am extremely proud to be a nurse and to educate the next generation of future nurses who will bravely care for the sick. There is no greater privilege. ♦