

Angel

It is still common to see depictions of nurses as spiritually pure beings.

But the image of nurses as virtuous hand-holders and pillow-fluffers suggests that they don't need education or resources — and that nurses' main aspiration should be to do their work without getting much rest, money, or respect for what they think about patient care.

In fact, nurses are not angels. They are college-educated science professionals of all genders who use their advanced skills and courage to save lives. A few examples:

Nurses must detect subtle changes in patient conditions and take bold steps in response, like when a patient's heart stops and nurses defibrillate to start it again.

Nurses must advocate strongly to protect patients from life-threatening errors or misguided care plans, even if it means taking on physicians, police officers, insurance companies, bureaucrats, or hospital management.

Nurses must use their psychosocial skills, education and toughness to provide effective care to patients who are violent, intoxicated, or having psychotic symptoms.

Real nursing is challenging — because it is intellectually, emotionally, and physically demanding.

But poor public understanding of nursing, fueled by stereotypes like the angel, contributes to a lack of resources for nursing education, clinical practice, and research.

That can mean worse patient outcomes — including death.

Our future depends on nurses. Nurses depend on us to understand their true value.

A message from nurses everywhere.

