

# CAN SHORT DRESSES CAUSE SHORT STAFFING?

**The “naughty nurse” image remains a media staple. Should people care?**

We think so. Linking sexual images closely to nursing--to even the fantasy idea that nurses are sexually available to patients and physicians--reinforces long-standing stereotypes. Those stereotypes discourage practicing and potential nurses, foster sexual violence in the workplace, and undermine nurses' claims for more clinical, research, and educational resources. Desexualizing the nursing image is a key part of building the strength the profession needs to overcome the current shortage, which takes lives worldwide, and to meet the challenges of 21st Century health care.



Of course, most people today probably don't think the average nurse goes to work looking for sex. But the relentless fusing of lingerie with nurses' work uniforms, and the frequent exposure of sexy "nurses" bodies, still associates the profession with sex. At best, it suggests that nursing is so unimportant that nurses can focus on sex while supposedly caring for patients. Others may simply see nurses as looking to snare a physician--another common image. Naughty nurse and other stereotypical images add to the chronic underfunding of nursing research, education and clinical practice. This is because health care decision makers are less likely to devote scarce resources to a profession that has become so degraded in the public consciousness. Such images also discourage men and self-respecting, talented women from entering the profession. Abundant research shows that the media affects how people think about nursing. Details at [TruthAboutNursing.org/research](http://TruthAboutNursing.org/research).

The devaluation of nursing translates into an underpowered profession that may not be strong enough to save lives when we need it to do so. The "naughty nurse" isn't going to catch deadly medication errors, intervene when a patient is about to crash, or teach a patient how to survive with a life-threatening condition.

The net result of nursing stereotypes is a dearth of funding for nursing, which harms not only nurses, but also their patients. Help us strengthen nursing and patient care. Join us at [www.TruthAboutNursing.org](http://www.TruthAboutNursing.org). Thank you.

