Fall 2021 TV Preview!

More good portrayals of nursing are coming on the BBC’s *Call the Midwife* and Netflix’s *Virgin River*. On the new *Ordinary Joe* (NBC), the lead character is a nurse in one of three alternative timelines. But *Bob Hearts Abishola* (CBS) will return with a nurse who decided last season that high achievement required her to become a physician. *Ratched* (Netflix) will likely have more battle-axe and other stereotypes. And otherwise, the prime-time landscape will be dominated by physician-centric shows, including the new *Good Sam* (CBS) and *Doogie Kamealoha, M.D.* (Disney+).

September 2021 – As U.S. television production has ramped back up, the fall prime-time season is back, with a few helpful portrayals of nursing amid a slew of damaging physician-centric shows—and sadly, some losses among the few good nurse characters.

Two new shows promise more of the standard Hollywood model. CBS’s *Good Sam* (premiering mid-season), about a female heart surgeon managing
other surgeons including her own father, looks like another festival of physician awesomeness. Same for Disney+’s *Doogie Kamealoha, M.D.* (Sept. 8), in which a whiz kid becomes a physician before turning 16. Every major clinical character on those shows seems to be a physician. But on NBC’s *Ordinary Joe* (Sept. 20), which examines three different paths a man’s life might take, one path involves becoming a seemingly skilled and autonomous nurse, although early episodes suggest the show does not include much nursing.

Among returning shows, *Call the Midwife* (BBC/PBS; Oct. 3) will return for a 10th season about the exploits of skilled and autonomous nurse-midwives in 1960s London. It’s still the best show on television for nursing. Netflix’s *Virgin River* (2022), which is partly about a smart, resourceful nurse practitioner (NP) in a remote California town, will be back for a fourth season.

The veteran shows *Chicago Med* (NBC; Sept. 22) and *The Resident* (Fox; Sept. 21) will also return. They mostly focus on physicians, but *Chicago Med* has also had three major nurse characters, and *The Resident* has had possibly the strongest single nurse character on U.S. television in NP Nic Nevin. Unfortunately that character and one of the *Chicago Med* nurses are leaving their shows.

The CBS sitcom *Bob Hearts Abishola* (Sept. 20) has a competent Nigerian-born nurse as one of its two leads, but last season she vowed to abandon nursing for medicine, reinforcing the wannabe-physician stereotype.

Among Canadian shows that made it to the U.S. last year during the pandemic, *Transplant* (NBC; mid-season) will return with a physician-dominated portrayal of a Syrian physician’s work in Toronto. But it’s not clear if the U.S. will see the second season of *Nurses* (NBC). That Toronto hospital drama features five knowledgeable young nurses who make a real difference for patients, but who are also inexperienced and often intimidated.

Shows that surely will continue to air in the U.S. include *Grey’s Anatomy* (ABC; Sept. 30), *The Good Doctor* (ABC; Sept. 20), *The Big Bang Theory* (CBS; Sept. 20), *The Young and the Restless* (CBS; Sept. 20), and *General Hospital* (ABC; Sept. 22).
include *Grey’s Anatomy* (ABC; Sept. 30), *The Good Doctor* (ABC; Sept. 27), and *New Amsterdam* (NBC; Sept. 21), all offering a vision of hospital care in which physicians do everything that matters. And *Ratched* (Netflix; 2022) will return with its iconic battle-axe character and other nurse stereotyping, which was at least mitigated in the latter half of the first season, as the characters softened and even performed a few redemptive acts.

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New international text Nurses and Nursing leads off with chapter by Truth leaders

The exciting new textbook Nurses and Nursing: The Person and the Profession includes a chapter on nursing's image by Truth leaders Sandy Summers and Harry Jacobs Summers. Edited by Padraig O Luanaigh, RN, EdD, the thought-provoking new textbook from Routledge "draws on international contributors with a range of backgrounds to explore, engage with and challenge readers in understanding the many aspects and elements that inform and influence contemporary nursing practice." Our chapter is "Nursing's public image: Toward a professional future." We thank Dr. Luanaigh for the opportunity to be a part of this important new book.

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