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NURSING'S NEW TV ICON

NURSE JACKIE: an adulterous addict with lousy ethics or a smart, skilled and subversive nursing anti-hero? The new black comedy/drama series that divided American nursing this year has hit our screens on Tuesday nights starring Edie Falco, who last played a mafia wife in the Sopranos, as an expert emergency nurse with a bad back, pain-killer addiction and her own idiosyncratic moral compass.

Nursing Review asked emergency nurse practitioner Michael Geraghty and former emergency nurse leader Jane Lawless for their take on Nurse Jackie (see [page 9](#)).

So far Nurse Jackie appears to have bemused and amused Kiwi nurses rather than prompted the abuse she attracted from some US nursing circles. In fact, the New York State Nurses Association wanted a disclaimer tacked on to the end of the show telling viewers that Nurse Jackie was an "aberration". In a letter to broadcaster Showtime, the association's chief executive officer, Tina Gerardi, said the public's view of nurses was influenced by television and "Jackie" had "no qualms about repeatedly violating the nursing code of ethics". And the National Federation of Nurses president said she found Nurse Jackie's worst behaviour "extremely insulting" and it made her "really sad".

So, not all were happy with a nurse who in the first 30-minute episode forges one patient's signature,

commits adultery in her lunch-hour with her habit-feeding pharmacist lover and flushes an abusive patient's severed ear down the toilet.

But the same episode also shows her finely honed skills picking up a doctor's fatal diagnostic error, passionately advocating for her patients, saving a fellow diner from choking while her doctor friend eats on and later being asked to work a double shift before nearly committing a fatal IV error through fatigue.

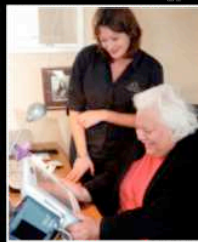
Fans of Jackie with all her problems, courage, compassion and expertise include American nursing media advocates Suzanne Gordon, who recently visited New Zealand, and Sandy Summers of the Truth About Nursing website. Gordon asks why nurses want TV to show "angels" in hospital. "Why don't they understand the difference between early 21st TV drama and a public service announcement for the profession?"

Summers, an arch critic of the portrayal of nurses in Grey's Anatomy and House, has hailed Nurse Jackie as perhaps the strongest TV portrayal of a modern nurse ever – a deeply flawed but tough, life-saving nurse with formidable clinical expertise and a sharp wit.

You can only watch it yourself and make up own mind whether this subversive "angel" is more sinning than sinned against or simply good entertainment. +

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COUNCIL DEFERS DECISION ON RN SCOPE

RN SCOPE/FIONA CASSIE

DECISION-MAKING ON possible changes to the registered nurse scope has come to a halt after the Nursing Council found no clear direction from the sector. As *Nursing Review* went to print, Nursing Council chief executive Carolyn Reed announced that the council was unable to make a decision after analysing and discussing the 150 submissions to its May consultation document on how to handle expanded practice.

The consultation was prompted by the council's growing concern that some nurses were carrying out extended practice roles, like first surgical assistants, outside the current scope with public safety and liability implications.

Others in the sector believed the council's interpretation was too restrictive and the profession was capable of setting appropriate credentialing standards for extended practice.

Pam Doole, the council's professional standards manager, said the council decided to take more time to consider the issues and would talk again to key stakeholders before taking the issue back to the council table in early 2010.

Chief nurse Mark Jones said the issue was seminal to the sector and it was a big opportunity for the nursing sector to come together and give a common, united response to the council.

He said if the council was not given a clear steer, its default position was to go for the safe option of creating an additional scope for extended practice or have a council-run authorisation process.

"If our profession would rather that doesn't happen it [the council] would need to be assured that there's a unified nursing position on something different." College of Nurses executive director Jenny Carryer said the college and New Zealand Nurses Organisation were already in agreement and she was not sure where the different stands had come from. But having read the submissions analysis she could see why the council found it a difficult decision and was glad they were being transparent and taking more time, as it was a "really critical issue to get right". Meanwhile the sector would need to keep working.

Susanne Trim, New Zealand Nurses Organisation professional services manager, said the major nursing groups already had a

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