

Kasmarik continued . . .

Q: Are you currently practicing nursing?

A: I've always practiced nursing in some capacity. Right now I'm an R. N. volunteer with the Hospice of Fresno, which offers supportive care to the terminally ill and their families.

Q: How did you become interested in hospices?

A: I did my dissertation on the attitudes of nursing students toward death and dying. In the past, nurses were taught to develop an intellectual understanding about death but to retain a detached demeanor. But when someone dies, it is much more than an intellectual exercise. Today, nurses are encouraged to express their feelings, to cry with the families, and become a part of the experience. When sorrow is expressed freely, the experience is complete. This way you grow closer to the families in need of your services, plus the fact that if you don't have a method of venting yourself, you burn-out very quickly.

Q: Do you think baccalaureate preparation for nursing is absolutely necessary?

A: Yes. A recent study conducted by the National Institute of Medicine published its recommendations for the nursing profession. The report stated that the ever increasing technology in medicine created the need for a broader, more intensely prepared individual in nursing. The report specifically addressed the need for baccalaureate and graduate education, which is supportive of our department's philosophy.

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Q: How would you describe the current trends in health care?

A: We're seeing a change in the health care needs of society. Aside from the elderly who may require longer periods of hospitalization, I think the future trend will be decreasing numbers of people spending time in a hospital. There will be other alternatives. For example, surgi-centers allow patients to be admitted in the morning, have their surgery, stay for a few hours of observation, and be released the same day—provided they have someone to assist them at home. We're also seeing extended care facilities developing for those patients who don't have people to care for them. I think there will be a greater emphasis on preventive health care and nursing professionals will be running "storefront" clinics in the community.

Q: How would you counsel a student who is considering a career in nursing?

A: I would want them to have a more realistic view of the profession than what the media portrays. I'd probably select a few people for them to talk to who are already working in the field. I would include a recent graduate, as well as a person who has been around for a while in order to give the student an appreciation of how one progresses through the field. I think it's important for students to know what their options are.

Q: What do you find most rewarding about the nursing profession?

A: I'll try to put it into words. It is dynamic and everchanging. It is the quality of human interaction. It is the gratification that comes from seeing positive changes in the people that you are helping. There are those times of great crisis and need during intensive care situations, but just as important are the protracted experiences with patients who have long term illnesses. You deal with them from day to day, month to month, and you are able to help them through it and see the changes. The same kinds of rewards come from observing progression in students, and that's always exciting.