

Front Line Nursing Stories: Making a Difference: An Anthology from the 1940s to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Marian Facciolo

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The personal essays gathered in Front Line Nursing Stories capture the compassion, expertise, and diligence that nurses exhibit to meet the demands of their profession.

Marian Facciolo's essay collection *Front Line Nursing Stories* gathers firsthand narratives from Canadian nurses who chronicle the profession's environment and culture.

Structured in twelve sections that discuss topics including elder abuse and advocacy, palliative and end-of-life assistance, mental health, and pediatric trauma, these stories relate the challenges, rewards, outcomes, and experiential and practical knowledge that nurses encounter as they provide care and emotional support to patients and their families. Their stories detail the reasons they became nurses, the art and science of nursing, the insight gained from assisting patients with moderate and complex medical conditions, and the hazards to nurses' health and safety when they are not supported by the health-care systems they serve. The resultant portrait of care management is thorough, covering nurses' roles as community health-care providers in multivariate form.

"Nursing Saved My Life" covers several incidents that caused a nurse to revisit her past trauma yet also established her unbreakable connection to people in pain: "As I think back and reflect ... I can feel my gut churning and wrenching [but] I believe that when I open up and tell ... my own story, they know I understand their pain." And "A Graceful Journey" conveys an honored memory of a patient's last moments.

Because they span decades, the stories also impart an interesting sense of the profession's evolution. One contributor was ninety-two years old when she shared her story; she recalls Depression-era training and duties in "Nursing in the 1940s." And "I am Not Your Handmaiden" makes notes of improvement in physicians' "dictatorial" attitudes and disrespect toward nurses since the 1990s. Elsewhere, COVID-19 is shown to have increased public awareness and appreciation of nurses' fundamental importance to the health-care system; in "Nursing During COVID-19," a nurse says, "We were called 'heroes,' which made me feel a little uncomfortable, since I do not consider myself a hero; I am just doing my job."

Among the book's varied contributors is Facciolo herself. She shares her experiences in labor and delivery, hemodialysis, case management, and teaching in order to illustrate the range of opportunities that the nursing profession offers. She also narrates portions of the book to contextualize its gratifying, daunting, and oftentimes traumatic events; she shows nurses managing illnesses and disease as well. However, the collection includes some repetitive stories too—entries that cover similar opinions and procedures without need—and some of its stories merely fade away rather than ending in an impactful manner.

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AMY O'LOUGHLIN (May 11, 2023)

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