



One Nurse Universe: Recollections from the Bedside

Susan Turnage

Dog Ear Publishing (Jun 10, 2019)

Softcover \$14.99 (218pp)

978-1-4575-7064-3

One Nurse Universe is a wise, entertaining nurse's memoir that reflects on changes in health care over the past fifty years.

In Susan Turnage's graphic and humorous memoir *One Nurse Universe*, a lifetime of vignettes arc through almost five decades of nursing experiences.

Capturing her time as a nurse, Turnage shares a range of incidents, including the "street theater" of performing doctor's orders; patient education during a home visit with a recalcitrant elder; putting an entire box of bandages on her skinned knee; and home care for ungrateful parents. Her text reflects on topics like the revolving door of emergency room care for homeless psychiatric patients who are unable to afford medication, too.

Turnage's stories jump across time and space as they attempt to convey the vast variety of situations that a career nurse encounters. Her own creative resiliency stands out in incidents like surviving training in how to give a bed bath (the nude patient was equally terrified) and making an entire ward of somber children's oncology patients and their families laugh on a difficult day. A gruesome death serves to caution a new generation about the dangers of street abortions and the violence that lies behind women's most desperate decisions.

Explicit sensory descriptions help in eliciting emotional reactions; Turnage aims to make her readership "laugh, sigh, cry, and perhaps suppress a gag." A chapter about fecal incontinence underscores the looming themes of empathy, quick thinking, and the art of caring as a nurse's calling. Turnage's time as a nurse for the corrections system also helps to illuminate the deficits of American mental health care.

Brief, effective snippets of dialogue capture the personalities of those Turnage encountered throughout her time in hospitals, home care, the corrections system, and phone care. They include teachers, colleagues, patients, and patients' families. Explicit descriptions of body emissions and responses to it illustrate the variety of ways that patients and families cope with the challenges of aging. Gallows humor gives way during Turnage's candid descriptions of her struggles when it came to assisting her aging parents, and internal reflections indicate personal growth.

Explanatory paragraphs are frequent and help to bridge the gap between lay readerships and Turnage as a medical professional. The book's chronological trajectory is effective and also helps in tracing the book's important parallel story of the rise of government outsourcing and corporate priorities in medicine. Toward the end, the sequence is muddled by a more thematic approach that works to include topics like healing touch and abortion. Syntactical and proofreading errors are a detraction.

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LISA ALEXIA (September 13, 2019)

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