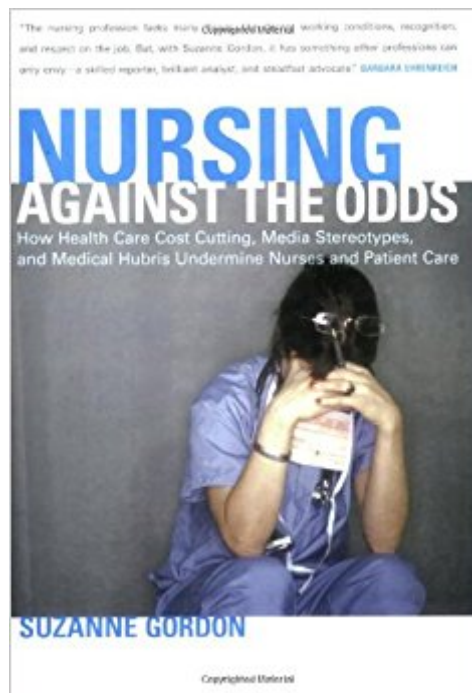




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Nursing Against The Odds: How Health Care Cost Cutting, Media Stereotypes, And Medical Hubris Undermine Nurses And Patient Care (The Culture And Politics Of Health Care Work)



Synopsis

In the United States and throughout the industrialized world, just as the population of older and sicker patients is about to explode, we have a major shortage of nurses. Why are so many RNs dropping out of health care's largest profession? How will the lack of skilled, experienced caregivers affect patients? These are some of the questions addressed by Suzanne Gordon's definitive account of the world's nursing crisis. In *Nursing against the Odds*, one of North America's leading health care journalists draws on in-depth interviews, research studies, and extensive firsthand reporting to help readers better understand the myriad causes of and possible solutions to the current crisis. Gordon examines how health care cost cutting and hospital restructuring undermine the working conditions necessary for quality care. She shows how the historically troubled workplace relationships between RNs and physicians become even more dysfunctional in modern hospitals. In Gordon's view, the public image of nurses continues to suffer from negative media stereotyping in medical shows on television and from shoddy press coverage of the important role RNs play in the delivery of health care. Gordon also identifies the class and status divisions within the profession that hinder a much-needed defense of bedside nursing. She explains why some policy panaceas—hiring more temporary workers, importing RNs from less-developed countries—fail to address the forces that drive nurses out of their workplaces. To promote better care, Gordon calls for a broad agenda that includes safer staffing, improved scheduling, and other policy changes that would give nurses a greater voice at work. She explores how doctors and nurses can collaborate more effectively and what medical and nursing education must do to foster such cooperation. Finally, Gordon outlines ways in which RNs can successfully take their case to the public while campaigning for health care system reform that actually funds necessary nursing care.

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Customer Reviews

"One of the most comprehensive and insightful discussions . . . of the complex set of relationships that have developed over the years between doctors and nurses. Nursing against the Odds should be required reading for all nurses, doctors, and nursing and medical students, . . . who will find this book both provocative and enlightening." [New England Journal of Medicine](#), 29 September 2005

"Exhausted by heavy work, mandatory overtime, and the stress of looking after hospital patients who are sicker, frailer, and in need of ever more high-tech intervention, nurses are leaving the bedside faster than they can be replaced. . . . People who are interested in the health care system or in their own health care should pay attention to the issues Ms. Gordon raises in this book. But nurses especially should read it." [Cornelia Dean](#), [New York Times](#), 17 May 2005

"Gordon uses anecdotes, research findings, and statistics to develop the list of contributing factors and potential resolutions to the current nursing shortage in more developed countries. She offers a comprehensive, international overview of the key issues." [Ellen Zupa](#), [The Lancet](#), 27 August 2005

"Gordon's detailed information in the form of interviews, documented research, groundbreaking advances and setbacks, statistics, and opinions about the state of nursing are compelling. . . . You will recognize that there isn't any issue related to nurses and nursing that Gordon hasn't examined. . . . This book isn't just for nurses. It is a comprehensive depiction of how nursing is indeed working against the odds to provide a safe, caring environment for patients. Nurses hold the key to the solutions. Gordon gives us the data and talking points to move to the action stage." [Kay Bensing](#), [Advance for Nurses](#), 1 August 2005

"Suzanne Gordon, a national award-winning journalist, author, and adjunct professor, is an advocate for all nurses. Gordon isn't a nurse, but believes nursing to be an honorable profession and the backbone of our health care system. . . . This book addresses the main forces that drive nurses out of their workplace; the crucial issues that deprive communities of adequate care of the sick, and the class and status divisions within the profession. But Gordon doesn't focus only on the problems, past and present, facing the nursing profession, but the remedies as well." [Terry Ratner, RN, MFA](#), [Nurseweek](#), 9 May 2005

"The nurses Gordon describes in multiple anecdotes are almost always

clinically astute and are frequently the first, occasionally the only, professionals to observe, interpret, and respond appropriately to signs and symptoms that foretell disaster for the patient. Despite the horror stories of disasters and averted disasters, Gordon fortunately places the issues of nurses and doctors at work in a larger historical and sociological context."

— Barbara A. Mark, Ph.D., RN, FAAN, Journal of the American Medical Association, 17 August 2005

"The nursing profession lacks many things, like decent working conditions, recognition, and respect on the job. But, with Suzanne Gordon, it has something other professions can only envy— a skilled reporter, brilliant analyst, and steadfast advocate."

— Barbara Ehrenreich

"Nursing is one of the most honorable professions I know. I'm proud of the service I provided during my nursing days. I learned so much about my beliefs, values, and passions as well as learning about others. Anyone who has spent time in a hospital knows that nurses are the true caregivers, the backbone of our health care system. Most doctors spend only a few minutes with their patients while nurses are there around the clock. This is an important book and needs to be required reading in all our medical schools."

— Naomi Judd, RN

"The shocking real-life stories Gordon describes in *Nursing against the Odds* echo what our members experience every day. Readers will not only learn how the nursing profession has suffered over the years due to the many pressures of the nation's evolving health care system—they'll understand exactly what needs to be done to meet the challenges nurses and patients continue to face today. Gordon takes a candid look at the current nursing shortage and paints a vivid picture of how nurses are uniting throughout the profession to raise patient-care standards. This book is a must-read for anyone involved in the healthcare industry."

— Andrew Stern, SEIU International President

"*Nursing against the Odds* is a brilliant and long-overdue assessment of nursing at a time of crisis in health care—what has gone wrong and what can be done to restore this once-esteemed profession to a position of equality with doctors. It should be read by anyone interested in the hierarchy of medicine, and the reasons why the nurse is becoming an endangered species."

— Richard Selzer, MD, author of *Letters to a Young Doctor*

"Suzanne Gordon's book contains a wealth of ideas for legislators and policymakers who want to protect patients from the consequences of managed care and hospital restructuring. Gordon shows that real health care reform requires strong coalitions between nurses and the communities they serve."

— U.S. Representative Bernard Sanders (I-VT)

"Suzanne Gordon provides new and important insights into the complexities involved in the current nursing shortage. *Nursing against the Odds* contains the right mixture of patient/nurse anecdotes and scientific evidence for the conclusions reached and finishes with constructive suggestions for steps that can be taken to correct the situation."

— Margaret L. McClure, RN, EdD, FAAN

"The nursing profession lacks many things, like decent working conditions, recognition, and respect on the job. But, with Suzanne Gordon, it has something other professions can only envy-a skilled reporter, brilliant analyst, and steadfast advocate."-Barbara Ehrenreich "Nursing is one of the most honorable professions I know. I'm proud of the service I provided during my nursing days. I learned so much about my beliefs, values, and passions as well as learning about others. Anyone who has spent time in a hospital knows that nurses are the true caregivers, the backbone of our health care system. Most doctors spend only a few minutes with their patients while nurses are there around the clock. This is an important book and needs to be required reading in all our medical schools."—Naomi Judd, RN --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

This book has deeply influenced the way I see the profession and has inspired me to pay attention to the social, economic, and cultural forces at work in the hospital that can endanger patients. This book made me feel like nurses are victims of external forces that they are constantly struggling to defeat, but I know that her excellent purpose for writing the book was for us to stand up for what's right and take control of our work environment so we can care for our patients to the greatest degree of our ability and education. She calls for nurses to take responsibility and action for what is going on just as much as she hammers the media, cost-cutting administration, and abusive colleagues for making nurses powerless to affect positive change in their patients' care. Ms. Gordon did a great job including nursing data from all around the world and several different hospital systems, as well as dissecting in-depth a couple of hospitals that she discovered had lost respect for the value of nursing. However, some of her generalized assessments of the nursing profession were slightly inaccurate, which of course can be allowed for when such large generalizations are made. For example, she stated that Bachelor-prepared nursing students do not receive as much clinical training as Associate-prepared students. In my area, this is not true. Here it is known that ADN-prepared students receive much less clinical hours, and with less autonomy, than BSN-prepared students. In fact, the BSN preceptorships are twice as long. Thanks to Ms. Gordon for writing this book. I recommend it to all who enter the profession, but be aware that this is not a feel-good book. She uses much data and journalist expertise to draw a picture of the profession that might shock or surprise those who are not in healthcare. But for us who are, her words ring true.

I read the book and am going to graduate from a nursing program in June of '08. I was so disenchanted as to what went on in the book as I see it going on when I am in clinicals. I probably

wouldn't have picked nursing as my number one profession after being in the hospital setting and it should be a read the first quarter of new nursing students. The book is very factual, as to what I have witnessed thus far. It is a shame it has to be the almighty dollar when it comes to health care. This country is so rich and yet it has so many people without coverage. Most of my fellow students are trying to RUN from bedside nursing as the patient ratio is not safe. Schools need to revamp their programs with more hands on experience. We get little to prepare us for the real world. Any nurse will tell you "You will start learning when you get your first job, that is when the real learning begins." It is no wonder there are at least 300,000 med errors a year. Let us shadow a nurse for at least a quarter to see what it's all about. If I wasn't older, I would pursue another degree.

This is a really interesting book. I have worked in a variety of nursing settings and have never had the issues that this book brings up(at least not to that extent), but that's not to say these problems don't exist. It's an easy read, because of all the anecdotes presented and how jarring some can be. But I would have liked a little less bias in the writing. It tends to sound like a rant on physicians after a while, and that can get annoying. The focus is specifically on RNs, and NPs and PAs are generally lumped in the MD category, so don't expect information on nursing from the NP perspective. To someone that has not worked in healthcare, this book can be really scary and should be taken with a grain of salt, but definitely a thrilling read. If you have experience working in a hospital, this is really interesting to compare your personal experience with nurses from across the country. Highly recommended, even though it is quite biased.

Been a nurse for a few years now...and this book was written a while ago, but I have to say that this book hits the nail on the head. It describes everything (and I do mean EVERYTHING) that has disappointed me about the nursing profession. Everything touched upon in this book is as relevant today as it was back then. It is disappointing that nothing has changed, and only seems to get worse.

Wow! This book is still quite relevant to the nursing profession 10 years after it was written. While things are slowly improving in some areas, others don't seem to have made much progress! Every nurse and clinician should read this. Actually there are many lay people who should read this to understand more about what nurses do and how hard they have to work to do it.

This book is a very astute examination of nursing's current state in healthcare and the systematic

issues that plague the profession. Interestingly, though not surprising if you read the book, this author is not a nurse herself, but a journalist who writes about healthcare issues. I find this lends her arguments a bit more weight as an outsider with a perspective and not just "another nurse complaining about her job." I think that this book should be required reading for ALL NURSING STUDENTS AND FACULTY! I also believe that if anyone wants to truly understand the current nursing shortage, and why it's a recurrent trend in healthcare, that they should read this book as well. To the author, well done.

This book should be a requirement for all nursing students. Most nursing schools teach only textbook nursing, the basics needed to pass the Nclex. This book tells you how real world nursing really is. Thank you Suzanne Gordon for being the voice of nurses everywhere!

Suzanne Gordon totally nailed what's wrong with healthcare as we know it.

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