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MTV's Scrubbing In 'Hurts Perception of Nursing', says RN

By Jess Mansour Scherman on March 4, 2014 5 Comments

You play the role of the nurturing caretaker and fearless problem-solver in your everyday life. Whether it's with your children, your coworkers, or your friends, people often turn to you for both advice and for comfort. You're great at putting the needs of others above your own.

What you may not know is that the skill set you already possess can be easily translated into a career in the ever-growing caretaking industry of nursing. You're already well on your way just by being who you are.

Amidst researching the field, many nursing hopefuls were excited when they heard there would be a reality show depicting the daily lives of nine young nurses. For someone thinking about getting into the industry, but still unsure of what to expect, it sounded like a gold mine for career research.

"I thought it would be great to have a program that would accurately depict what nurses actually do," says Lorie Brown, a registered nurse and attorney. Brown is the founder of empowerednurses.org, a website dedicated to providing a voice for nurses and educating them in protecting their licensure.



Her excitement quickly faded as she learned the reality TV show would be hosted by MTV, home of some of the most **notorious “reality” shows** that many parents ban from their households. “The show hurts the overall perception of nursing,” Brown says.

So let’s get to the reality behind the “reality” and find out what real nursing professionals have to say about the controversial MTV show, *Scrubbing In*.

***Scrubbing In* is not the reality of nursing**

The television series follows a group of nine young travel nurses as they tackle a temporary assignment in California. Nick Angelis, registered nurse and author of *How to Succeed in Anesthesia School*, was a traveling nurse for years before becoming a nurse anesthetist. He is quick to express his fondness for the experience but agrees that *Scrubbing In* is not a realistic portrayal of the job or of the industry.

Brown adds to the conversation in expressing her disappointment that there is very little portrayal of the clinical component of nursing. “You really have to feel like this is your calling, because as rewarding as it will end up being, there are things required of nurses that you can’t pay most people to do,” Brown says.

Brown knew she wanted to be a nurse when she was ten years old and has since dedicated her life to the profession. She adds that nursing has the potential to be unendingly rewarding for those who choose to dedicate their lives in the same way.

These nurses 'can't be trusted'

For all we know, the nurses portrayed on *Scrubbing In* could be great at what they do, and we all know that working in medicine isn’t for the faint of heart. But MTV doesn’t show us that. Instead, we see nurses drinking copious amounts of alcohol, arguing incessantly and acting wildly in public—at times while still wearing their scrubs and hospital nametags.

“It’s putting your place of work on display,” Brown says, while stressing the fact that, in this profession, you are a nurse 24/7. “We would never see physicians or doctors acting in such a way. If we did, we wouldn’t trust them. The medical profession is all about trust.”

Brown also found conflict with the show’s portrayal of nurses using hospital equipment after hours in unauthorized ways, which she confidently states is **akin to stealing**. During her time as an attorney, she represented many nurses who found themselves in similar predicaments. For more on that, check out her book, *Law and Order for Nurses*.

Back to reality

By now, it's no secret that *Scrubbing In* has received some backlash from the nursing community. **MTV has responded** to such claims, asserting that they were unaware of potential repercussions for their portrayal of nurses. The network has committed to change certain aspects of the show in attempt to bring it closer to the reality of nursing.

With those changes in process, the question remains: **Has the show inflicted irreversible harm upon the nursing profession?**

It seems nursing professionals are torn on that one.

Nick Angelis admits that the show is not a realistic portrayal of the nursing world, but he also says most people understand that an MTV reality show is, by nature, going to be pretty unrealistic. He adds that *Scrubbing In* may still hold the potential to convince a few bright prospects to dig deeper into the field of nursing and possibly discover their calling.

Brown, on the other hand, suggests that MTV is too concerned with the general entertainment factor and, as a result, has devalued the profession of nursing. "Nurses have had a hard time getting over the perception of not being professional from portrayals like this," she says.

The bottom line ...

Brown, who has been a keynote speaker at various nursing conferences, most recently for the **Indiana Association of Nursing Students**, urges any prospective nursing students not to base their perceptions of the profession on what they may see on *Scrubbing In*. "Research [the profession] thoroughly on your own," she encourages.

Even if you're a huge fan of *Scrubbing In*, it's clear that those connected to the field disagree on its value as a tool for finding the right career. But if you want real resources that rely on tried-and-true career research, check out [*10 Reasons to Become a Nurse Now*](#) or [*10 Facts You Didn't Know About the Rasmussen College Nursing Program*](#).

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