

That Unique Career Without Enough Men: The Social Issues Facing Males in Nursing

Thomas Perez
 Ramapo College of New Jersey, Mahwah, NJ, 07430

My Focus

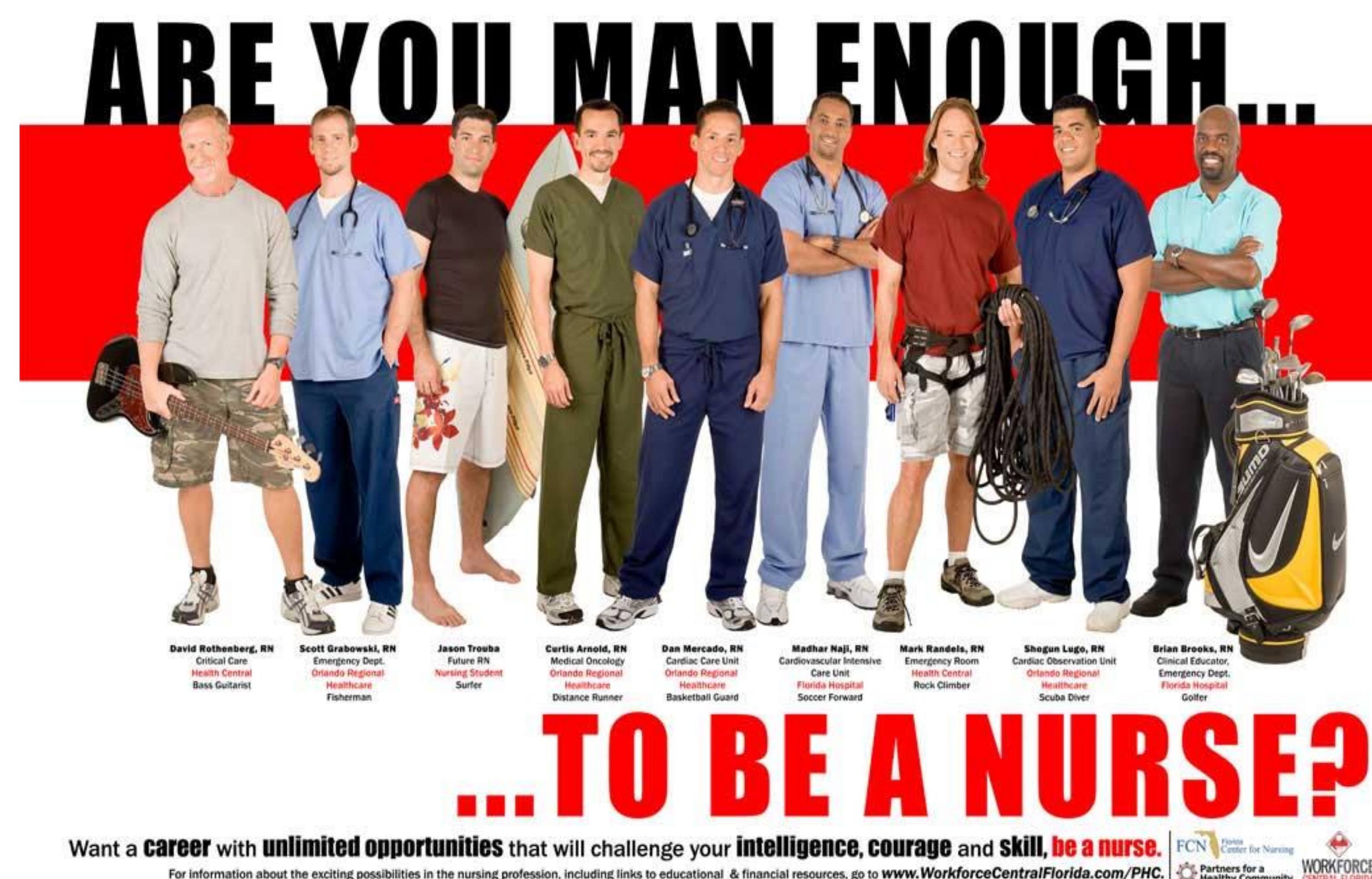
The following project will focus on the representation of male nurses and the challenges they face working in the field of nursing. Using the findings from multiple studies, I analyze the different stereotypes associated with male nurses as well as the prejudices that male nurses confront.

Social Conflicts within the Hospital

Being a part of the minority, one of the challenges male nurses confront is extra attention and pressure. Compared to their female counterparts, not being able to blend in makes male nurses' actions stand out in the spotlight. Similarly, many male nurses feel isolated, as not being part of the norm. The social interactions between male and female nurses also hinder their overall experience. On top of feeling social isolation while working, it gives males a disadvantage bureaucratically since they make less connections. This social obstacle causes male nurses to turn towards other professions in the hospital that have a higher male population. Befriending physicians, technicians, and aids gives satisfaction for the male relationships; however, it also can alter the hierarchy within the hospital. Male nurses are more willing to critique or question doctors' authority since there is a sense of camaraderie between them. Moreover, many male nurses attempt to put more emphasis on work that differentiates them from nursing. Lastly, many males struggle with their masculinity as it is challenged by doing a "woman's job".

How Do Female Nurses Feel?

Overall, most female nurses recognize and accept the increase of male nurses in the workplace. However, some feel it is necessary to have certain limitations in place, such as restricting males working in a maternity ward to avoid uneasiness from the patients.

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Hikes' Categories of Male Stereotypes

In his article, Joel Hikes focuses on 4 key stereotypes that affects male nurses. The first category, called "Ladder climber", demonstrates that the male nurse is very ambitious and wants to rise in the hierarchy. While it may seem as a positive aspect for a worker, many female nurses with higher authority feel threatened. Secondly, the "Troublemaker" stereotype identifies the male nurse as the root of all conflicts within the hospital. Because of the male nurse's actions or presence, a certain avoidable problem occurred and he is to blame. Thirdly, the category of "He-man", where the male nurse is seen as a physical laborer and must lift the heavy equipment, patients, etc. due to his strength and is not recognized for his knowledge of nursing. Lastly, the category of "Homosexual" which stigmatizes male nurses with the same negative connotations many LGBT people face.

The Importance for Change

With an increased need for nurses, institutions should be pushing for more inclusiveness within the nursing program. By only advertising for women, nursing programs are missing half of the population that may have been qualified to join the program. As the male population grows, patients who might not feel as comfortable with a female nurse can be treated worry-free with a male nurse.

What Can We Do?

As a whole, medical institutions as well as colleges and universities should change the images of nurses by including more gender diversity. Similarly, colleges/universities should provide a history of males in nursing to demonstrate their historical impact.