

FRIDAY, APRIL 8, 2005

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### **Nurse in English**

Well, I would have to say that I agree with the recent Star-News editorial, "Colleges can help solve nurse shortage," but only in part.

In nursing in the United States, it is of the utmost importance that any nurse has a complete and fluent understanding not only of conversational but medical English. English is the language of health care in this country. It is in English that physicians give orders, and it is in English that nurses are expected to give and receive reports from their fellow nurses.

Any nurse that enters a hospital without a significant level of competency in English is a danger to their patients, fellow health-care providers and themselves. Courses in social acclimatizing can also help the foreign-born and foreign-trained nurse make a more stress-free transition from nursing in their home country to nursing in the new home country.

Though I applaud Mt. SAC in their "Welcome Back" program to encourage foreign trained nurses living in California to learn the ins and outs of our health-care systems and nursing practice in order to facilitate California licensure, it is equally important that English is not optional, but mandatory.

Not that long ago, I worked an entire shift where, due to lack of competency in English by not only the other nurses, but the physician and respiratory therapist, as well, orders during a code were given in a language other than English (in this case it was Tagalog).

If I had not demanded that the orders be given in English, not only would I have been unable to provide the necessary care, we could have jeopardized our patient's life.

I am a Registered Nurse and hold a Ph.D. I am not the only RN who has had such an experience. And though I welcome foreign-trained nurses because they bring skill and knowledge to our profession, we cannot underestimate the critical need of competency in English. English is as equally important as knowledge of nursing, and should not be an afterthought.

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