

The Value of Sharing Your Story as a Recruitment Strategy

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As today's youth explore return on investment when they consider a career, I encourage you to take the low-key recruitment approach and inform them of the value of a career in the health professions. Look for opportunities to share your health profession story. As a son of sharecroppers, I have been taken places by my career in nursing that I could have never dreamed, since I had no idea of the possibilities. From direct care in a hospital, to nursing education in a university, to health care recruitment throughout the state, nation, and the world—my nursing career has provided numerous challenges and has made a tremendous difference in my life, as well as the lives of countless patients and health profession students. As I moved forward in the nursing profession, mentors informed me of the potential of working in a hospital critical care unit and of becoming a professor in a graduate program. One colleague even shared information about teaching continuing education to nurses on an Alaskan cruise ship. Can you believe that? Nurses work on cruise ships.

We need to tell our health profession stories to today's youth. We need to intensify our efforts to recruit underserved minorities into the health professions, and a one-on-one conversation is a great place to begin. While there are numerous recruitment tools and strategies, one of the best and most effective is word of mouth. I encourage each of us to have a 30-second story ready, to share anecdotes and personal attributes regarding our health profession careers. Some people call it an elevator speech, but be prepared to share future possibilities to young people and others regarding the health professions. We need to invest time and resources early on to inform young people in inner cities and rural areas of the opportunities available. We need to share with young people the excitement, challenges, decision-making power, and rewards of careers in the health professions.

In your conversation, help youth understand the preparation needed in mathematics and sciences to assure success. They need to know that well-prepared students are more likely accepted into health profession programs. Share with them barriers you faced in your journey and how you overcame them. Talk with them about challenges they might encounter, and discuss some possible strategies for overcoming them. Tell them and their families how to access needed resources.

With some health professions you'll need to be aware of the "ick" factor. In the nursing profession, some people regard injections, blood, and death as distasteful or difficult to discuss. When responding to those questions, you might inquire about individuals' thoughts, feelings, and experiences. You might also help them understand that educational programs in the health professions prepare graduates to successfully address a wide variety of challenging subjects and tasks to meet family and client needs.

As I talk about a career in nursing, I find people are surprised to learn health care is provided in a wide variety of settings other than a hospital, such as nursing homes, home health agencies, schools, industries, and even in movie production companies and on cruise ships. Others are not aware of the variety in patient populations, such as infants, pediatrics, adolescents, young adults, adults, older adults, and geriatrics. Variety is also available in specialty areas, such as medical and surgical care, critical care, cardiac care, emergency room, mental health, and a number of other health care services. Some tend to think that health care is "girl's work," and I usually inform them that, while females represent a large proportion of particularly the nursing profession, more men are definitely needed.

So let's reaffirm our commitment to tell our health profession stories. After all, today's youth are tomorrow's health care professionals, and who knows, sharing your career story may just be the awareness an individual needs to choose a career in the health professions.

"Hi, my name is Dennis, and I'd love to tell you about the challenges, opportunities, and rewards of a career in the health professions!"