



## DEAR DR HARTMAN

### *Professional Upstarts*

Hello patients,

I've been having problems with the nursing lassies lately. Actually the little bitches have been showing signs of restlessness for quite some time.

Last week I saw a sticker on a car in the staff section of one of my clinics. It said, "Nurses care - about wages". I sacked the girl on the spot. A few days later, at a major public hospital, I saw a notice for a staff meeting on the Casualty noticeboard. It was addressed to the "rank and file nurses". What next? Matron Norm Gallagher?!

As you can imagine I felt quite unnerved by this symptom of the socialist cancer within our midst, but a patient was expecting me, so I went into the ward. (I was treating this patient on a private fee-for-service basis, I can assure you.) As I lay my healing hands on the patient, who was lying in what was left of the public hospital system, the nurses treated me almost as an equal. We even shared the same tea room after theatre. Astonishing, isn't it?

It used to be so different. Just a few years ago I would walk briskly down the long hospital corridors, my shoe heels clicking on the highly polished floors. As I entered the ward to do my rounds, a young un-

derling nurse would spot me approaching, and I'd hear her hushed, urgent whisper, "Doctor is coming!"

Suddenly there would be a flurry of activity. All would be tidied and washed before me. Unsightly body fluids would be removed, and the nurses and patients would line up for a military-style inspection. The 1st year nurse would have one blue star on her cap, the 2nd year nurse, two blue stars, and so on. We all knew where we stood. Everyone was secure.

What's it like today?

Why, now you're lucky if you can even find a Sister to welcome you onto the ward! And if you can find a "Sister", there's every chance "Sister" will have a beard, because men do nursing these days. It's terribly unnerving. Yes, patients, nurses have changed. This is the result of a series of catastrophic mistakes; mistakes which must be rectified.

Mistake number 1: Too much education. Originally prospective nurses could leave school very early, and then learn their place on the wards. It was good clean back-breaking work and it prepared them for a life of selfless toil. Then the meddlers got involved, and the lassies were required to finish high school before we handed them a bed pan. This is where the trouble started. Now the situation is completely out of control, and we're sending them off to pseudo-universities to become mock cream professionals. No wonder they're getting ideas above their station!

Solution: Get them straight back into the wards, with as little formal education as possible. I know medicine is very high-tech these days, and working in intensive care is like flying a 747. But we doctors can change the light bulbs on all those flashing machines. The nurses needn't worry their pretty little heads about them.

Mistake number 2: The standard of uniform has deteriorated. Interestingly enough, the Catholic Church made the same mistake when they let the nuns take up the hems of their habits and wear sandals.

I myself first became aware of a decline of standards in uniforms when I saw a busload of schoolgirls from my old private school. It was a shocking sight. No panama hats, no ties, no gloves and, most frightening of all, their socks were turned up! These days the staff in McDonalds look more professional and impressive than any nurse. Those little microphone systems at the mouth of the supervisors really inspire confidence. But take a look on any hospital ward. Where are the caps? Where is the starch? Where are those detachable buttons?

Solution: Student nurses should be forced to use buckets of starch and wear a large, ornate metal belt, which must be cleaned daily.

Mistake number 3: The lack of role models for young nurses. Florence Nightingale is no longer appropriate. Historical research has shown that Florence was an uppity bitch who was over-confident in her organisational abilities, and who spoke back to doctors under fire in the Crimean War.

Solution: The nurses should look to the New Testament and adopt Mary Magdalene as a role model for young nurses.

Of course, in her early life Mary suffered from a dubious sexual reputation, but this is more in keeping with the average young woman of the 90s. In later life Mary embodied the spirit of the handmaiden. She never once questioned the healing methods used by the Apostles and Jesus. Remember that lovely image in Luke: Chapter 7, where Dr Jesus and the 12 Interns are sitting around a table. Nurse Magdalene approaches carrying an alabaster jar of exquisite ointment. Without a word, she kneels and washes the feet of Dr Jesus, using her hair to wipe the precious ointment from his feet.

This image should be displayed in every hospital across Australia.

*Send your problems to Dr  
Hartman's secretary, Julie  
McCrossin, care of ALR.*