

Celebrating Unsung Heroes

THE IMPORTANCE OF NURSING EDUCATORS

Ashley Ryan MSN, RN
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A Passion for Nursing

When asked about her career choice, Ashley Ryan's simple response is "I've always wanted to be a nurse. There's nothing else I wanted to do." As a first-year clinical nursing instructor at Marquette University, Ryan knows she is right where she's supposed to be. "All through high school when my friends had no idea what they wanted to do, I always knew I would go into nursing," Ryan said. "I was one of those people who had a calling for the field." Her first semester at Marquette had Ryan teaching clinicals for an array of students including undergrad nursing students and master's level direct entry students (non-nursing degree students who would like to pursue a career as a registered nurse (RN)).

"I love working with students," Ryan said. "It's amazing to experience the excitement my students get doing their first IV or first catheter. Also, science is changing every day and I love being a part of that. There's no greater joy than being able to bring knowledge to other people."



Nursing and Dementia Care

In her nursing studies at Carroll University, Ryan always had an emphasis on dementia care. Her grandmother is living with Alzheimer's and she was able to bring her real-world experience to her field. "It's no surprise that there is a need for specialized education to care for people with dementia," Ryan said. "Nurses are at the forefront of patient care, but a lot of education programs don't have a lot of content surrounding how to safely care for people with dementia. There is a certain level of patience and understanding required to work with those living with dementia, and currently there is a lack of confidence and training to accommodate this. As a part of my Capstone project I developed a pilot dementia education module. We looked at the different types of dementia, common behaviors and addressed real life scenarios. There was a focus on staying calm with patients and respecting their boundaries."

The Landscape of Nursing

The COVID pandemic has brought increased attention to the medical profession, with extra light shined on the field of nursing. "As an instructor, I was a little worried that some people would not be going into nursing, due to the burnout from the pandemic," Ryan said. "But at the same time, these extreme circumstances are drawing some people to nursing. It gave a new light to nursing that hadn't been there before. Nurses do a lot more than people thought and I think society has a greater appreciation for the role."

Ryan is hopeful to grow those interested in the field. "With an aging population, there is a greater need for those who can care for older adults," Ryan said. "While nursing isn't for everyone, it is an exciting time to be a part of the field. New research is coming out every day, so if you're the type of person who enjoys staying cutting edge, this may be the field for you."

Ryan is a Clinical Instructor at Marquette University focused on nursing care for persons with acute conditions. She has her Master of Science in Nursing degree from Carroll University and is a member of Sigma Theta Tau International. She has also been active in the Walk to End Alzheimer's® Waukesha County with a Carroll University Walk Team.