

In Hospital

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I had a short stay in a public hospital in Melbourne, Australia for about 4 days recently and put pen to paper to keep busy while I was there. This little essay is the result of that effort.



The Staff

The dedication and commitment of the medical staff to the job and patients was unquestionable. They displayed complete and utter patience when dealing with all sorts of people from the 'locals', different countries and backgrounds with varied cultural habits and requirements. 'Terms of Endearment' used by nurses to get the patients to oblige were quite varied with the most common being 'Darling', 'Sweetheart' and 'Love'.

One has to wonder why some choose nursing as a career? You will also wonder WHY some try to do nursing.' The other obvious group is those who are 'born to be' nurses. I doubt that it is for the money.

Then one cannot overlook the overzealous nurse who tries to do too much for patients, can provide inaccurate information. Most times the casual patient will be looking forward to going back home after a day or two in hospital and this is where this type of nurse may come in. They make it sound as if the patient is destined to spend the rest of its life in hospital and may never leave these surrounds.

Talking about nurses; there are nurses of various types, from different backgrounds and cultures. One thing that comes through is that the essentials of the profession are consistent. One but can't help notice the different accents with some noticeable confusion. For instance, like some patients, it is not easy to differentiate between the European accents.

Support Staff

The doctors and nurses do, to a large extent, depend on the hospital staff such as cleaning staff, assistants (who move patients around on wheel chairs, trolleys and other mobility equipment), information officers who guide visitors and other people who come into the hospital for any reason. I doubt that any hospital could function efficiently without their support staff, volunteers or paid.

Uniforms

One other quite noticeable omission is the lack of 'old style' uniforms. In the old days, the hospital staff was quite evident where you knew who was a Doctor by their white coats and Nurses by their

starched uniforms and head gear displaying their names and positions badges. These days, one does not know who is a Doctor or who is a Nurse. A lot of the staff carry Stethoscopes!

The most common dress I noticed was overalls, mostly blue and red. Some others just observed a 'smart casual' style, I was told.

The Patients

There are so many types of patients with their own ways of behaviour and the Nursing staff deserve gold medals for the way they adapt to the needs of patients. Some patients are hardly noticeable, completely inconspicuous and quiet, whilst others are so loud and boisterous that one feels like using force to 'put them in their place' so to speak. One such incident was a couple of days ago, the Nursing staff had to call for assistance from the hospital Security to 'quell the riot' with this particular patient yelling quite loudly that he was being attacked, which of course was completely untrue.

One will invariably come across a 'groaner', especially at night where this person gets louder. In addition to the normal groan, some add a sound similar to what sounds like a name to the groan.

There is also the 'smartie' who will want to argue with a nurse trying to administer medications claiming that 'this is ridiculous' and 'rubbish' Then, one will occasionally encounter a 'Singer' who starts to sing in a foreign language and tune, yet to be determined.

In a ward or room where there are other patients, it can be a spine chilling experience listening to a doctor explaining an issue or a medical procedure to a patient.

It is remarkable to observe that in an emergency, even a mild situation, Doctors, Nurses and other Support Staff jump into action to assist in a very positive way.

Another type of patient is the one that is not fluent in English and may even require an interpreter to communicate. Look around the ward; if you're not lucky enough to have a room to yourself, you will notice all sorts. Most will be looking straight up at the ceiling while others will be glued to overhead television sets. You will also get those who don't give a damn about the others in the room and turn up the volume on their respective TV's drowning out the other TV's, which as you can imagine, is very irritating, not to mention being just plain rude!

There is also the 'quiet type' of patient who you hardly notice, except when a nurse or doctor talks to him or her. To contrast this type of patient, there was the case of this fairly senior guy who was regularly leaving his bed to visit a female patient's bedside, presumably from the same country as they were conversing fluently, until the nurse reminded this guy that he was to stop disturbing the other patients. Do you think that he stopped? Oh No, No, No!

There was also one guy who ran a business from his bed, or so we thought and heard! He was regularly giving directions to the person on the other end of his mobile phone of what to do and not to do we thought, once again in a foreign language.

There is also the case of the 'reluctant patient' who just wants to go home. They claim that the medical staff here all wanted to kill the patients and everything being done is 'rubbish and BS'. I suppose that you do get the rare oddball who does not appreciate the good work done by this dedicated team that continues to serve in spite of this type of patient refusing to acknowledge, the thankless work of the medical team. One cannot have anything but admiration for the 'medicos' who persevere with explanations of the prognosis and recommended treatments.

So, there you are!

The Food

One has to look at the type of hospital food; an interesting topic and hope that patients are not fussy eaters! The food is not 5 star great, but adequate, I don't know how many stars you would rate this type of food!

Generally speaking a patient is presented with a choice of limited menu options to choose from the day before. These menu options are usually within a patient's dietary restrictions.

In the old days, afternoon tea or coffee was almost a standard event; these days, I am told, a patient has to ask for it. Tea or coffee between main meals is still being provided, sometimes with a biscuit or two if you ask for it!

It also depends on the particular hospital you are in. Some will allow home-made food to be brought in whilst others firmly object to this.

Going Home

When the Doctor checks you out and tells you that you are OK to go home, usually in the morning, you feel a huge sigh of relief and you start to wonder when, but then the Nurse tells you that it will be 'in the afternoon or evening' and there is no definite time, you feel so frustrated not being able to make arrangements to get picked up!

If you need to get a stock of medications to take with you may have to wait for a couple of hours, or you could just take the Prescriptions to your own Pharmacy and get the medications there, which I opted for, however, I did not get any prescriptions to take away. I was given an envelope addressed to my 'Local Doctor' and a list of the medications that I was on in the hospital.

The taxi I usually take could not pick me up as he was too far away (knowing my luck) so I had to get one that came to the hospital. The Nurse who wheeled me to the entrance had to rush back to the ward and I had to wait. Then I got lucky when a taxi dropped some people off and who the Security guy promptly hailed, and the taxi driver took me around to his vehicle and I was on my way. This taxi driver was a talkative guy and quite pleasant, but that's another story, as they say.

And I was home, at last!

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