

# The privilege of nursing

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The International Year of the Nurse and Midwife in 2020 has demonstrated the strength of nurses across the world. Whilst it may not be how it was intended to celebrate our profession, the COVID-19 pandemic has meant that nurses have shown just how versatile, knowledgeable and able they are in adapting to new situations. This has come at a cost to some in their ways of delivering care, the challenge of engaging with families and friends and their own physical and mental health. So why do we do it?

We do it because being a nurse is a privilege. We are invited to take part in someone's life when they are vulnerable and we try our utmost to make a difference. This may be in a number of ways as health promoters, health preventers, health educationalists or in health maintenance. We empower individuals to review their lifestyles to make decisions that enable them to live and die with compassion and caring. We are at the forefront of new ways of working and use our creativity and innovation to ensure that care provision is based on evidence and understanding.

Sean Harrington, Matthew Grundy-Bowers and Eamonn McKeown demonstrate this in their qualitative study on the experiences of London-based men who have sex with men while using PrEP. The voices of the participants are heard clearly through the article and they add to our understanding of what it is like for these men who incorporate PrEP into their lives. It explores the emotional, mental and physical aspects of PrEP use, which enables us as nurses to engage more effectively with individuals by sharing these described experiences with others.

Using self-care management as their focus, Andrés Brito Villa, Maria Paola Caruso and Federica Dellafiore demonstrate that self-care practice and abilities in individuals with HIV can wane over time. Their cross-sectional study on Italians with HIV shows that the nursing role of a health promoter is an ongoing and challenging one, to assist individuals with their own decision making.

But nurses do not do this alone. As Linekar identified in her discussion of teamwork [1], nurses are not soloists

but are part of a much larger orchestra of disciplines and agencies working towards the same goals. At times, we may take the spotlight and lead the way in conducting the orchestra and at other times, we take our place among our colleagues to ensure the tune is melodious.

However, working in the field of HIV can be challenging for staff at times. Matt Wills, HIV social care coordinator, provides an honest reflection of his own journey through burnout from secondary trauma when the support of others became important in allowing recovery to happen.

In his CPD article, Darren Brown, a specialist HIV physiotherapist, encourages us to explore our understanding of HIV, disability and rehabilitation. This is an excellent example of learning from the specific skills and knowledge of our colleagues.

Being a nurse is a moniker I wear proudly. I am neither impressed nor amazed by what nurses can achieve because I know that we are courageous, skilled and knowledgeable doers. We place the individuals in our care at the centre of what we do and we collaborate with others to ensure their experience is of the best care available. We have demonstrated this with clarity so far in 2020. So, in the International Year of the Nurse and Midwife I hold my head high for my profession and continue to be grateful to work alongside others who place the individual at the heart of it all. Thank you all for your commitment, compassion and caring. This is a privilege we can be proud of.

We hope you enjoy this issue of *HIV Nursing* and we invite feedback on these articles. If you would like to comment, please send a message to [info@hivnursing.net](mailto:info@hivnursing.net)

## Reference

1. Linekar B. Teamwork: metaphors and myths on equality in the health-care setting. *Nurs Hist Rev* 2016; 24: 69–75.

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