

ASK A PRACTICE ADVISOR

by Beverly Balaski, RN Nursing Practice Advisor

I have been told that I am not allowed to wear my name tag with my professional designation on it or introduce myself as a "registered nurse" to my patients. I have been told that this is making the other health care providers on my unit uncomfortable. What should I do?

In the busy, complex environment of health care facilities it has become increasingly difficult to distinguish hospital personnel from one another. As most registered nurses no longer wear the starched white uniform and nursing cap, patients are no longer able to easily identify RNs by sight. It is the right of every patient to know who is caring for them. Therefore name tags with one's professional designation and formal introductions are crucial to informing the public of who is caring for them. Most agencies have policies indicating that staff must wear facility issued identification. These identification tags usually include the person's name and professional designation.

Buresh and Gordon (2000) state that "your introduction to the patient and to his or her family is

an important moment that has lasting consequences for you as an individual professional and for nursing as a whole" (p. 50). SRNA Council policy states that RNs must use their name and professional designation for identification to the public. The SRNA supports RN members to wear name tags that indicate that they are registered nurses. As well, all members should introduce themselves to patients and family members with both their first and last name and identify themselves as a registered nurse. This is our professional responsibility.

Buresh and Gordon (2000) also identify that "being silent and unknown is a persistent problem in nursing" (p. 50). They go on to say, "The nursing profession lacks the kind of identity that would lead the public to insist that nurses are also irreplaceable" (p. 15). In order to promote the image of registered nursing and the important contribution our profession makes, it is imperative that registered nurses clearly identify themselves through name tags as well as personal interactions.

References:

Buresh, B. & Gordon, S. (2000). *From Silence to Voice*. Ottawa, ON: Canadian Nurses Association.