



# MEN In Nursing



## Health Workforce Initiative

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Try to remember how you felt as a fresh-faced 16- or 17-year-old. In between thinking about sports, and other extra curricular activities and believing you knew so much more than your parents, how much consideration did you give to your future career? Looking back, what if you were provided with a workshop that highlighted the nursing profession? Not just explaining it, but pulling back the curtain to show how diverse it can be, how lives are touched and what it means to be a nurse.

That's the experience some California high school students are receiving today, as they take part in Men In Nursing conferences up and down the state. From panels and keynote speakers to focus groups and learning hands-on skills, today's high school student has access to so much more than a generation ago.

And to say they're getting a lot out of the conferences is an understatement. Conference organizers regularly hear post-conference comments like:

- ***"I extremely enjoyed this event. It was so informative for someone like me who is considering becoming a registered nurse."***

- ***"I am a first semester student and was not well informed about some of the simulation practices. I loved seeing the pros in action and hearing of their success. I hope that I'm a successful nurse in 10 years!"***
- ***"This conference got me more interested in nursing as well as giving me more knowledge about turning it into an eye-opening experience."***
- ***"This whole experience was something that was completely amazing and seriously fascinating in every form. I found the wound nurse presentation to be, by far, the most fascinating. I really want to do some more research on that field of nursing/medicine. I look forward to coming back at some point in time."***

This is just a glimpse of how real high school attendees feel when they leave the Men In Nursing conferences. But how they actually were able to attend is a story all in itself.

Men In Nursing embodies the idea that there's an inequality, and does something about it. Not screaming or picketing or blaming. It's embraces inclusion—and is backed by thousands in the industry.

We don't need a professionally funded study to prove there are far fewer men in the nursing profession—from decorated faculty to new students. But, studies certainly back up the gender gap fact.

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**In 2011, of the 3.5 million employed nurses, 9 percent were men while 91 percent were women.**

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According to a February 2013 United States Census Bureau study, there were 3.5 million nurses employed nationwide in 2011, and just 330,000 of them were male—a measly 9 percent. And that's in all areas of nursing, across the board.

So why so many Florence Nightingales and so few Frank Nightingales? And how does the nursing profession attract more men?

That's the idea behind the Men In Nursing initiative: to create awareness of the discrepancy, increase access to mentors and other resources, and boost the overall number of men entering the nursing profession.

## Conferences

The East Coast has long hosted Men In Nursing conferences, but traveling cross-country is very costly for West Coasters to regularly attend. Five years ago, The Health Workforce Initiative (HWI), led by Statewide Director Linda Zorn, consulted with John Cordova, Deputy Sector Navigator for South Central Coast Region, to seize the opportunity to run conferences for left coast attendees. He now plans an annual statewide conference every fall. His next conference is scheduled for November 13-14, 2015 at the Wyndam Garden Grove in Garden Grove, California followed by a Community Men's Health Fair on November 15.

HWI's conferences have been so successful that a group of equally passionate and determined women have begun their own local Men In Nursing workshops.

Cynthia Harrison (Deputy Sector Navigator for the Bay Area Region), Avante Simmons (Deputy Sector Navigator for Inland Empire Region) and Ann Durham (Deputy Sector Navigator for the San Diego/Imperial Region) each hold workshops in their respective regions.

The growth and success of the Men In Nursing conferences are a testament to the camaraderie nurses (men and women alike) experience when working the floor. Very few experiences create bonds as they do in the emergency room, operating room or delivery room, for example. And these connections continue outside the hospital walls and into the conference rooms, thanks to the passion of caring nurses.

You'll find Nursing Professionals, both men and women (mostly men) at a typical Men In Nursing conference, as well as Healthcare and Nursing Educators sitting side by side with current students. High school students were recently added to the mix, creating an exciting dynamic and engagement like never before.

*"We wanted the high school students to look at every possible career path or specialty area within nursing, because traditionally they thought it was just at the bedside in a hospital," said Cordova. "They have access to a broader range of professionals in specialty areas that pique the male students' interest into entering the profession."*



# Success

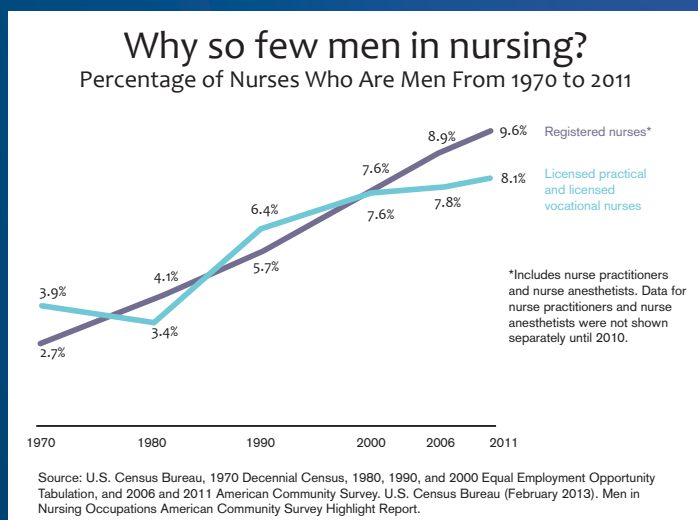
According to a recent study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, the average 2013 salary for male nurses was about \$70,000, versus about \$60,000 for women.

OK, so the Men In Nursing initiative has been successful, and more men at all levels and ages have been empowered to enter nursing. So that's a win, right? But why all the fuss that men are so heavily outnumbered? Simmons feels it's about fostering caring and the human connection—characteristics certainly not immune to men. The more caring in a hospital environment, the better the patient care. And isn't that goal universal in health care?

“Some people believe women are more caring, tender or compassionate, so therefore would make better nurses than men,” she says. “I say caring isn't gender biased or emasculating to men.”

And this is also where stigma enters the equation. Men in (or trying to break into) the traditionally female-led nursing profession face multiple stigma, including that it's not a traditional or lucrative career path for men, and if you're a male you should be a doctor.

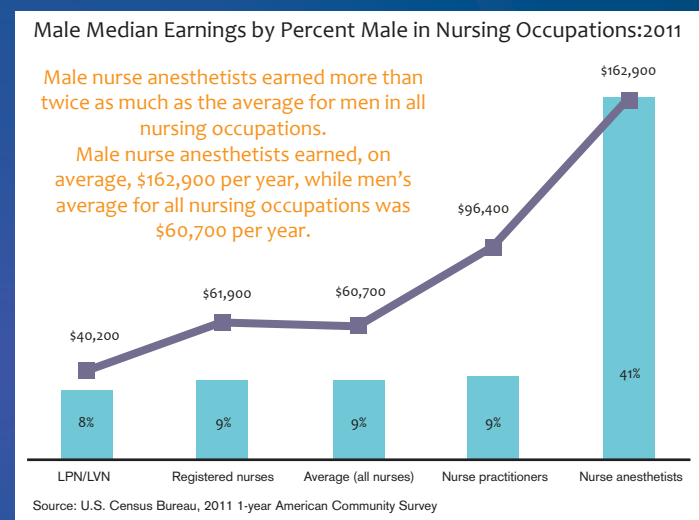
## Oh, where to begin debunking?



While a nursing career may currently be considered non-traditional for men, the tide is turning. A 2011 American Community Study revealed that just 2.7

percent of the nation's registered nurses in 1970 were male. By 2011, that number had more than tripled to 9.6 percent.

Since nursing is about human connection, Simmons notes, some male patients may in fact prefer someone of the same gender—so the influx of male nursing graduates is certainly welcomed.



How about pay? Despite being outnumbered by female nurses 9-to-1 on the floor, male nurses actually took home larger paychecks than female nurses. According to a recent study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, the average 2013 salary for male nurses was about \$70,000, versus about \$60,000 for women. The biggest pay gap by position -- about \$17,300 -- was for nurse anesthetists; the smallest -- nearly \$4,000 -- was for middle-management nurses.

Muench U, Sindelar J, Busch SH, Buerhaus PI. Salary Differences Between Male and Female Registered Nurses in the United States. JAMA. 2015 Mar 24; 313(12):1265-1267.

**Women who were full-time nurses earned 91 cents for every dollar a male nurse earned. Men out earn women when in identical nursing occupations.**

Another road the Men In Nursing initiative is on its way to paving is how things are done before nurses earn their paychecks. While colleges and universities with nursing programs are doing their part to educate their students, many up to this point fall woefully short in supporting an on-campus arm of the Men In Nursing initiative.

“Chapter development is a challenge because chapters are established at the college level. If it’s run as a college club, you’re limited to the college’s ‘club’ staff, in addition to what you have to do for the chapter,” said Cordova. “That also limits you, because if you’re not a student at that college, you can’t be part of that chapter, because it’s only a college club.”

To promote longevity at the college level, the Men In Nursing initiative must be built into the school’s DNA. For example, if a school chapter is established and the students run it then graduate without anyone to care for it, it will very easily (and quickly) die on the vine.

**This is where your brothers and sisters in the Men In Nursing initiative have truly excelled.**

While we know nursing is a fast-paced, demanding profession oftentimes with little wiggle room, it can also make a new student crumble. The critical one-on-one connection between working nurse and student (and future student) is made right there at the conferences. Those who run the conference inform and inspire with real-life stories, and have made inroads to change—something many nursing campuses fail to do because they’re not built that way. These conferences are open forums, where men are encouraged to speak candidly about their unique nursing school experiences—unique in the sense that they’re in an environment that’s long been dominated by women and is now taught by older women.

FACULTY GENDER	
Gender	% Faculty
Men	11.2%
Women	88.8%
Number of faculty	4,058

**According to data from the 2012-2013 BRN Annual School Report, California schools boast more than 4,000 nursing faculty members, and only 11.2 percent were male.**

In theory, if you’re one of the few men in a nursing program in California, you have roughly a 1-in-10 shot of having a male instructor while you’re in school—or never at all. So, it’s rare that a male-instructor-and-male-student mentorship ever develops.

“Most nursing students are so intimidated by their clinical instructor, they’re afraid that if they say anything, their semester will be made more difficult,” he said. “But there’s a way to talk to your clinical instructor that the men need to learn.”

Another challenge addressed at the conferences is the classic difference in styles of communication between men and women peers—the whole Mars and Venus thing.

“When a male nurse speaks to a female nurse, we don’t speak the same language,” says Harrison, recalling the topic was broached at her second conference. “The girl has to talk about what she’s done and the new pair of shoes she got, whereas the guy wants to cut to the chase, tell him what’s wrong with the patient and then get out. You don’t have that preamble.”

Chances are, if that topic hadn’t been brought up, nothing would have been said and that cumbersome dynamic would have continued. And out of that disclosure, Harrison and her panel developed a few new teaching strategies to become universal.

Additionally, a conference focus group identified that, despite completing their prerequisites just to get into the program, male students were dropping out at an alarmingly high clip during their first semester—and women were not. The reason? Working under a Wellness Model, the first nursing class that young men took was Labor and Delivery, which “can be a hard bridge for men to cross right away,” Harrison said.



# the Future



“Faculty hadn’t heard these issues before, because, of course, students and faculty don’t often have the opportunity to talk about certain issues,” Simmons said, underscoring the idea that conferences are open forums for everyone. The program has since been revised, resulting in a notably higher retention rate among male students. And you can make a case that the Men In Nursing initiative is responsible for a large part of that retention.

Men who have benefitted from Men In Nursing (and even those who haven’t, but support it) and then entered the workforce tend to maintain communication. One of the initiative’s strengths is the mentor factor—as more men experience the conferences and move on, they return with a “if I can do it, you can do it” mantra.

And it’s that mindset that’s encouraging more men to consider nursing: identifying role models, becoming empowered and not intimidated, and

growing confident enough to speak up when you notice an area for improvement.

“I tell students that a nurse is a nurse is a nurse. I’m not a male nurse, and she isn’t a female nurse,” said Cordova. “We’re both nurses, and we’re both trained to do the same thing.”

And according to the 2012-2013 BRN Annual School Report, over 11,200 students completed the nursing program in 2012-13, and 17.9 percent were male. And of the nearly 13,000 students who enrolled in nursing programs during that same time frame, 19.9 percent were male—more than double the percentage of employed male nurses nationwide in 2011.

It’s reasonable to assume that it could be a while before the full benefits of the Men In Nursing initiative are clear. For the time being though, engaging change, seeing mentors and faculty return regularly to contribute, and increasing enrollment every year are healthy indicators it’s on the right track.

So, what does the future of the Men In Nursing conferences look like? Bigger. Much bigger. And with more working male nurses making themselves available as mentors and providing much-needed tools and wisdom to the next generation of nurses, the future looks bright for the Men In Nursing initiative, as does the nursing industry in general.

**If you’d like to participate or contribute to the conference or workshops hosted by the Health Workforce Initiative, please contact Linda Zorn, Statewide Director/Sector Navigator at [ZornLi@butte.edu](mailto:ZornLi@butte.edu).**

*"Strong Minds, Healing Hands, and Compassionate Hearts"*

# MEN In Nursing

## CONFERENCE 2015

*Think like a man, heal with your hands and care with your heart...*



- **Garden Grove, California**  
**November 13 & 14, 2015**
- **Community Health Fair**  
**November 15**

For registration information: [SoCalAAMIN.org](http://SoCalAAMIN.org)



The College of the Canyons was awarded funding from the Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development Health Careers Training Program (HCTP) for the Men in Nursing Conference. The \$11,999 award will be used to help support high school students to attend the Fall 2015 Men in Nursing Conference with mentors to guide them through the first day of the event.



Health Workforce Initiative



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**Doing What MATTERS™**

FOR BUSINESS & INDUSTRY

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