

TO: Patient Care Services Associates
FROM: Kathleen Guarino, V.P Nursing/CNO
SUBJECT: *Notes from Nursing*

I just finished reading a great book, Lessons from the Mouse, by Dennis Snow. It's a quick read and while small in size, it's very large on insights into personal, professional and organizational success.

The "lessons" outlined in the book are assembled from Mr. Snow's twenty years as an employee of Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida. His experiences and examples give the reader a clear picture of everything that goes into creating the magic for the millions of people who experience Disney World every year.

Lesson 6, Pay Attention to the Details – Everything Speaks

This chapter started me thinking about how our dress affects our patients and families perception of us as competent and caring professionals. If "everything speaks" what does our uniform say about us? Research has shown that we make decisions about people within the first 3 seconds of meeting them and the next 90 seconds trying to confirm our first impressions. While it may seem unfair, the truth is that appearances do matter. What does your uniform say about your professionalism?

Admittedly, times have changed. The days of white dresses, stockings, shoes and cap have faded into ancient history. In many ways, this is a good thing in that individuality breeds innovation. Tasteful self-expression in our wardrobe can be great conversation starters with our patients that may provide a pleasant diversion during an otherwise stressful occasion. The downside however, is that if Nurses dress too casually, patients may question their attention to detail and professionalism. Many patients complain that everyone in a clinical setting looks the same. Patients want their Nurses to be clearly identifiable and they want them to come across as competent, caring professionals.

I know that upon reading this some may say "I don't care what other people think about me." I would submit that those folks are in denial. The billions of dollars spent each year in the fashion and cosmetics industries confirm that as a nation, we care very much about what our image says about us. I know that the Nurses at Mercy Hospital are among the finest in health care and I want our patients, their families, and our physicians to know that as well. Attention to detail, such as our mode of dress, speaks volumes about us and the first impressions we make. Let's make sure ours says "I am part of an honorable profession; you can tell by the attention I pay to presenting a well groomed, professional persona everyday."