

# Young, Thin, and Cute New Hires

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*The management at my place of employment recently hired a group of nurses who are all youngish, slim, and physically attractive as a response to declining patient satisfaction scores. Is the solution working? We can only wait and see.*

My workplace, a freestanding specialty hospital owned by a for-profit corporation that operates multiple facilities across the United States, has been having recent troubles with low Press Ganey patient satisfaction scores. This does not bode well in an era where patient satisfaction scores are tied to Medicare reimbursement rates.



Patients typically complain on the survey forms about random issues such as the food, the semiprivate rooms, their loud roommates, and the aloof manner of some of the physicians. Some mention that nursing staff failed to keep them informed. Once in a blue moon a patient comments that the hospital employs too many 'foreign nurses' or has staff who cannot 'speak English.' Whatever.

To combat the chronically low patient satisfaction scores, the managerial staff implemented a mix of interventions which they believed would make patients and families feel more 'cared for.' Hourly rounds, bedside rounding at the change of shift, more scripting, and more smiles have been put into action without much positive effect on the Press Ganey scores.

"What was management's next solution?" you're probably wondering. Administration announced they were hiring good people who were more friendly, skilled, positive, and indicated during their interviews that they actually wanted to care for patients. Well, the latest new hires have initiated more questions than answers.

Where do I start? They are all youngish, ranging from early 20s to early 30s. They are all fairly slim, nicely shaped, and physically attractive. The most experienced new hire has about six years of nursing experience, while the remaining nurses have anywhere from one to three years under their belts. The majority have no acute care experience and are learning certain procedural skills for the very first time: starting peripheral IV access, administering blood, performing wound care, operating feeding tube pumps, and so forth.

A few walk into patient rooms without employing basic relational skills such as knocking, introducing themselves, or explaining what they are planning to do. I'm not complaining; I'm merely observing.

*(continue)*



## About a Nurse



*"I have an interview at a hospital today, so I painted a smile on my face. At least I'll appear happy when they ask if I mind working holidays and weekends."*

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Here are my thoughts on this issue. Rather than hire a mix of highly experienced and relatively inexperienced nurses, the managerial staff opted to save on labor costs by hiring younger nurses with a certain attractive look that patients and families might find appealing. They hired no new grads because, I assume, they did not want to spend the staggering amount of money on 3-month orientation periods. They hired no one with 15, 20, 25, or 30+ years of experience because human resources would be forced to offer highly experienced nurses a significantly higher rate of pay per the wage grid. They hired no nurses who were badly overweight, gray-haired, or outwardly appeared to have health problems that would drive up insurance costs. To presumably get the most bang for their buck, most of the new hires have between one and three years of experience.

How is this experiment turning out? We shall wait and see.

