

Get "on side" with the nurses

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The infamous Nurse Ratchet

nurses in later shifts, and fewer requests from family members to explain progress and management.

The nursing staff is a buffer between you and every complaint imaginable to man that your patients may have. They can make your job easy or make your life hell so it is pretty important to make sure you develop a good working relationship with the nurses. That is not to say that you should do everything they ask of you, but a bit of courtesy and respect can go a long way. Often, if the nurses think that you are competent and reliable, they will stop pestering you for every minor thing.

A lot of the senior nurses are very experienced so you should consider their worries about patients seriously. You should take their ability to "triage" your patients with gratitude.

Where possible, always encourage those nurses who have an active interest in the more clinical side of health care. Explaining clinical reasoning and the management plan means that the nurses know why the team is doing what they are. This results in fewer questions from

Those nurses who are interested in learning procedural skills should have every doctor's full support – even if that means taking time to supervise them for their certification. Nurses who can interpret ECGs, site intravenous cannulas, perform venepuncture and insert male urinary catheters are worth their weight in gold.

Just as you are a junior doctor, there will be junior nurses on the ward as well. Though it may be annoying to be called to review something trivial, you must have patience. You have had the benefit of over half a decade of medical training. They have not.

Unfortunately there is always a slight undercurrent of "us versus them" mentality in nurses as a group against doctors and it can be frustrating on a bad day to hear jibes or disparaging remarks against the profession or against a colleague. As long as it isn't grossly inappropriate (e.g., in front of a patient), it is probably best to take it in good humour. Remember, when it comes down to it, when a patient losses control of their bowels, you're not the one who has to do the dirty work.