



A Nurse's
Experiences
in the
Emergency Room

Lesson 18
Lesson 18

Vocabulary List

Reference Notes

abdominal – *adj.* pertaining to the part of the body between the thorax and the pelvis.

Band-Aid – *n.* trademark for an adhesive bandage.

beta-blocker IV – *n.* an intravenous infusion of fluid containing a drug that decreases the rate and force of heart contraction and helps lower blood pressure.

CAT scan – *phrase.* a kind of x-ray that shows soft tissue, such as the brain tissue, rather than just the bones.
CAT – computed axial tomography in short.

catheterize – *v.* to pass or introduce a catheter into.

chaotic – *adj.* disorderly, confused.

concussion – *n.* an injury resulting from an impact, usually to the head.

desensitize – *v.* to have been made less sensitive.

hip – *n.* upper part of the thigh, formed by the femur and innominate bones.

hockey – *n.* a game played on ice by two teams of players using hockey sticks and a puck.

laceration – *n.* an irregular wound or tear in the flesh.

patch up – *v.* to mend, to bandage.

stat – *abb.* (*Latin* statim) immediately.

stitch – *n.* process of joining two surfaces by sewing, a suture.

typically – *adv.* characteristically, usually.

unique – *adj.* being the only one of its kind.

Reading

ER: A Nurse's Experiences in the Emergency Room

It's a busy Saturday night at the Kelsey General emergency room (ER). There's a long line of people with various injuries waiting for the attention of the busy doctors and nurses. There is a child with a face **laceration**, an older man suffering from an intense pain in his lower back, and a young man who seems to have broken his arm in a **hockey** game. On such a night, ER nurses are busy.

Being an ER nurse is no easy profession. Nurses have to remain calm, act fast and do a number of things at once.

“ER nurses are among the most skilled nurses in the hospital,” says emergency room doctor Peter Driesen. “The emergency room can often be a **chaotic** place, and nurses have to deal with so many different situations.”

Zachary West, emergency room nurse, agrees. “In one 12-hour shift, I may have to **catheterize** a 14-year-old boy who comes in with an **abdominal** injury, start a **beta-blocker IV** in an older man showing signs of a heart attack, take the blood pressure of an older woman with a broken **hip**, and prepare a 17-year-old girl with a **concussion** for a **CAT scan**.”

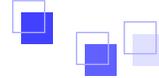
ER nurses **typically** work a 12-hour shift with three 15-minute breaks and a half hour lunch break. Unlike doctors, who move to different areas of the hospital as their services are required, ER nurses must remain in one place for their entire shift. How do these nurses do it day in and day out, especially when hospitals are becoming increasingly understaffed with various cutbacks to health care?

“What is most difficult for me,” says ER nurse Valerie Stanley, “is not becoming **desensitized**. We just see so much in here all the time. There are so many terrible things happening and so many people in a lot of pain. It is hard to remember that each person's experience is **unique**. I find myself thinking sometimes: OK, we've got two broken arms, a head wound that needs **stitches**,

bed six had a mild stroke etc. “I feel frustrated with myself when I think of patients as injuries rather than as people.”

35 West agrees that this is indeed a challenge. “No matter how many times I have seen a certain injury,” he says, “I need to remember that, for each person, this is most often his or her first time dealing with something like this, and losing control over one's body is a scary thing. So even though we're the trained professionals, I try to allow patients to take part in decisions about their bodies – even small ones. Asking a child what color **Band-Aid** he or she
40 would like can make all the difference in the world.”

On a busy night like tonight, West, Stanley and their colleagues are putting all their skills to work, **patching up** patients and trying to make everyone feel even just a little better.



Vocabulary Exercise

Fill-in-the-Blank – complete each sentence with the correct word suggested in the list. You may have to change the word form to fit the sentence.

laceration catheterize patch concussion desensitize
CAT scan beta-blocker IV abdominal hip unique

1. The doctors suspected that he had a tumor in his bowel, so they sent him for a _____.
2. Paramedics, police and firemen are in occupations where it is easy to become _____.
3. The lady was unable to void, so the nurse had to _____ her.
4. A _____ might be used in an emergency situation involving a heart problem.
5. The motorcyclist was unconscious because he suffered a _____ in the crash.
6. The patient had to have a lot of stitches to close the _____ in his thigh.
7. No person is exactly the same; each one of us is _____.
8. The nurse was occupied at the time, _____ up a wound.
9. His _____ pain was eventually diagnosed as appendicitis.
10. She was unable to walk for weeks until her fractured _____ began to heal.

Comprehension Exercise

Multiple Choice – Answer the questions or paraphrase each sentence/underlined phrase with the best choice.

1. There is a child with a face laceration
 - a. bruise
 - b. sore
 - c. cut

2. An older man suffering from an intense pain in his lower back.
 - a. severe
 - b. sudden
 - c. constant

3. ER nurses typically work a 12-hour shift with three 15-minute breaks plus a half hour lunch break.
 - a. 350 minutes in total
 - b. 45 minutes in total
 - c. 75 minutes in total

4. Especially when hospitals are becoming increasingly understaffed.
 - a. have more nurses
 - b. have fewer nurses
 - c. have too many patients

5. Various cutbacks to health care.
 - a. decreasing budgets
 - b. decreasing business
 - c. increasing problems

6. It is hard to remember that each person's experience is unique.
 - a. health care worker's
 - b. patient's
 - c. everyone's

7. I need to remember that, for each person, this is most often his or her first time dealing with something like this. This is because
 - a. I have treated the same injury before.
 - b. I know I am not a sympathetic person.
 - c. I don't want to become desensitized.

Clinically Speaking



Practice the conversations with a classmate. Pay attention to the words in bold face. Check a dictionary for new words or idioms and add them to your reference notes.

1. **Ambulance Attendants**, performing CPR as they **wheel the patient in on a stretcher**: Five-year-old girl **apparently** beaten by her father.

Charge Nurse in the ER: We are ready for her. Room No. 1, please. Thank you for calling ahead. Are the police here as well?

2. Nurse, as she runs for the crash cart: Code Blue!

Charge Nurse **runs for the phone**, sends another nurse and a doctor into the room to help: I'll make the call!

3. Charge Nurse in the ER **at the change of shift**: We have here on the blackboard 10 patients. In room No.1, Mary Chow, an unconscious five-year-old undergoing CPR, a victim of child abuse. In room No. 2, Mrs. Smith with an asthma attack has just arrested.

Nurse in charge of the newly arrived staff: Ms. Constino and Ms. Lee, will you relieve the nurses in room No.1? Ms. Kim, will you take over in room No.2?

4. Nurse: I'll gently **wash the gravel out** of your **scraped knee**.

Patient: Will it hurt?

Nurse: Don't worry, I will be very careful. I've got to be sure to **get every bit of foreign material** out of here.

5. Doctor: We will need to **call the next of kin** to identify the drowning victim.
Nurse: They have been called, doctor. They are on their way.

6. Doctor: Would you please **irrigate his wound** with sodium chloride **stat**?
Nurse: Will he be needing **stitches**?

7. Nurse: I have **nitroglycerin**, which the doctor ordered for your angina. It needs to be **placed under your tongue**.
Patient: Thank you. I feel miserable.



Main Ideas

Read the text thoroughly. Memorize the main ideas and try to fill in the blanks from knowledge acquired from the text. Search for the keywords in the text only after you have finished your first try.

1. _____ nurses are usually among the most skilled nurses in the hospital. They have to act _____ while remaining _____.
2. In a 12-hour shift, Nurse West may have to _____ a patient with an abdominal injury, start a _____ IV in a heart attack patient, and prepare a concussion patient for a _____.
3. ER nurses typically work a _____ shift with three 15-minute _____ and a half-hour _____. They must remain in one place for their entire _____.
4. The nurses' job is made more challenging by _____ in the budget and _____ in the work place.
5. Emergency room nurses need to remember that the patients are usually dealing with their respective problems for the _____ time and are naturally _____.
6. The nurses have to avoid becoming _____ no matter how many terrible situations they see day _____ and day _____.
7. It's important that nurses treat patients as people with _____ rather than only as diseases or _____.
8. To help patients feel they have some _____ over their bodies, staff should try to involve them in as much _____ as possible, even if only in small ways.

