

Opinion

Accountability? Look to nurses

Nurses have to toe their professional line in Oregon. Otherwise they are likely to be out of work.

That is apparent from a public announcement last month by the Oregon State Board of Nursing. The announcement listed — by name, offense and location — disciplinary actions it had taken against 53 nurses and nursing assistants during its meeting in September.

Several of the people named had agreed to give up their licenses “for using intoxicants to the extent (of being) unable to practice nursing safely.”

Some were reprimanded for failing to answer questions truthfully. Others were suspended for failing to cooperate with the board during an investigation.

Some were the subject of consent orders that prohibited them from performing the duties of a nurse “in any capacity.” One surrendered her license for practicing nursing “when unfit due to a physical impairment.”

One was reprimanded for failure to modify a plan of care as needed and for incomplete record keeping.

In Jackson County, a registered nurse lost her license for drug use and ID theft, another for client abuse and neglect, somebody else for intoxicants to the point of being unable to practice nursing safely.

Closer to home, the board suspended the certificate of a nursing assistant in Linn County for “derogatory and profane language in the presence of a client.” Other offenses in different cases elsewhere included fraud and misrepresentation during the certification process.

Nurses are human beings like the rest of us, and as in every group of people, professionals and otherwise, there are bound to be some who fall short.

But in an age when everybody preaches accountability and hardly anyone acts as though he means it, the nursing profession in Oregon seems to be one notable exception. Judging by this list, nurses hold each other to certain standards, and if they fail, they're out. (hh)