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Leadership and Nursing

June Girvin

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Preface

This book has been written during what can at best be described as a challenging period in my career, but a period in which I have learned much about leadership. Writing it has helped me to make sense of many experiences – not just recent ones, but also ones from throughout my career – and I hope that it will also help the reader to see things a little more clearly. Good leadership is a beacon in a murky world. It can make even the most difficult of circumstances exciting and stimulating to work through. Good leaders should be nurtured, supported and recognised for the major contribution they can make to working lives. Poor leadership not only stunts organisations, but can also leave the people working in those organisations angry, frustrated and bewildered.

Sadly, our tolerance of ineffective leadership seems endless, particularly where it occurs outside our own profession. We have been, and still are, quick to criticise nurse leaders who do not meet our expectations, but it is harder to be openly critical of the hand that feeds us – the manager and the employer. Recognising poor leadership is the first step towards improving it. This book is written to help nurses to understand nursing leadership and the factors that have influenced its development over the years, but I hope that it may also enable the reader to recognise good and not so good leadership, whatever the background of the leader. I hope that it helps readers to choose their role models carefully and develop their own skills effectively.

In an ideal world, I would dearly like to see a clinical qualification become essential for any senior, influential management position. Clinicians are best placed to manage and lead the service; they do, after all, know it best. Far too few nurses aspire to chief executive positions, and even fewer actually reach them. Nursing is not a support service, but it is a hard struggle ensuring that it is not treated like one. So, learn to lead – then get out there and turn the boardroom tables over.

JMG
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