

a radical change of heart

Georgie Coster challenges us to examine our prejudices about other health professions

Do you ever feel like doctors are the enemy? I must admit, I find it too easy to slip into that mindset. I see a prescribing error and show another nurse, while I roll my eyes and pass a glib comment

about nurses saving the day – yet again. My patient complains to me that the doctors were ‘in and out’ on the ward round within five minutes, without explaining anything properly. She hasn’t got a clue what her treatment plan is. How do I respond? Do I join

her in righteous indignation about their brusque manner and lack of presence? Perhaps I've got a patient who can't be discharged until the doctor comes back to prescribe their medicine for home. When they get frustrated and ask me what the delay is all about, do I throw my medical colleague (metaphorically) under the bus and lay all the blame at their feet?

A notable change in my attitude came when a prayer meeting started in my hospital for all Christian staff. There were other nurses there, but the group was largely made up of senior consultants. Something about being with colleagues from other disciplines in a *Jesus-centred context* changed my heart towards them. In the clinical setting, it is so easy to develop a pack mentality: nurses vs the world. Nurses work hard, and because we do, self-pity can creep in like a thief in the night causing us to believe that we are working harder than all the other professions. The remedy I found for this 'chip on the shoulder' is unity in Jesus.

'Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over

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all and through all and in all! (Ephesians 4:3-6)

What has stood out to me recently is that Paul doesn't instruct us to **create** the unity of the Spirit, but to **keep** the unity of the Spirit. I love that thought: unity between believers is already there. We all have the same Holy Spirit living inside us. What we do with that unity is up to us – and Paul's exhortation is that we make every effort to keep it. Something special happens when we gather together in the presence of God to seek his face. My own experience is that I found my heart knitted together with the hearts of my medical colleagues. Such a contrast from the friction, and even bitterness, I had felt towards them on the ward.

For me, it came with a ripple effect. It impacted my attitude toward colleagues from all disciplines, whether they knew Jesus or not. Hearing non-nurses pray sincerely for the hospital gave me a much better understanding that we all come to work with a common purpose: to use our knowledge and skills for the good of our patients. This applies to admin staff, estates, supplies, and the IT helpdesk. Of course, there will be tension at times, as we each play our different roles. We will frustrate each other and we will get it wrong. In those moments, it is easier by far to

moan about our colleagues from other disciplines than to remind ourselves what pressures they might be under.

This year I helped to lead a Saline Solution course in my area. Shortly afterwards, one of the participants began her FY1 rotation on my ward. We were genuinely glad to see one another each day and the way we spoke to each other made it obvious that we were more than 'the doctor' and 'the nurse'; we were sisters; we were keeping the unity of the Spirit. I know this didn't go unnoticed by our colleagues. What a testimony it can be when we find fellow Christians in other disciplines and display a countercultural partnership in a realm where 'us versus them' so often dominates the atmosphere.

If an honest examination of your heart reveals a festering disgruntlement towards certain professional groups, may I suggest finding Christians in that same profession and getting together with them to pray? I really believe that can be the beginning of a radical change of heart. 🌱

Georgie Coster is CMF Associate Head of Nursing

If you have questions about starting a prayer group in your work setting, Georgie would be happy to discuss this with you. You can email her at: georgina.coster@cmf.org.uk