



ANGELS & HEROES

Critical care nurses perceptions of the angel hero label used to describe their roles and practice during COVID-19

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BACKGROUND

International Nurses Day




The reality.....



Commentary |  Free Access

Angels and Heroes: The Unintended Consequence of the Hero Narrative

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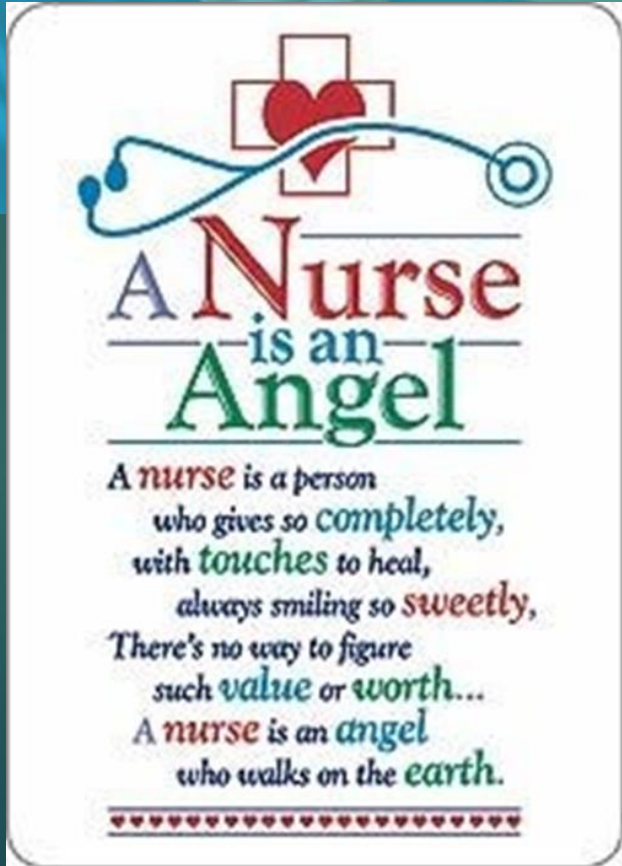
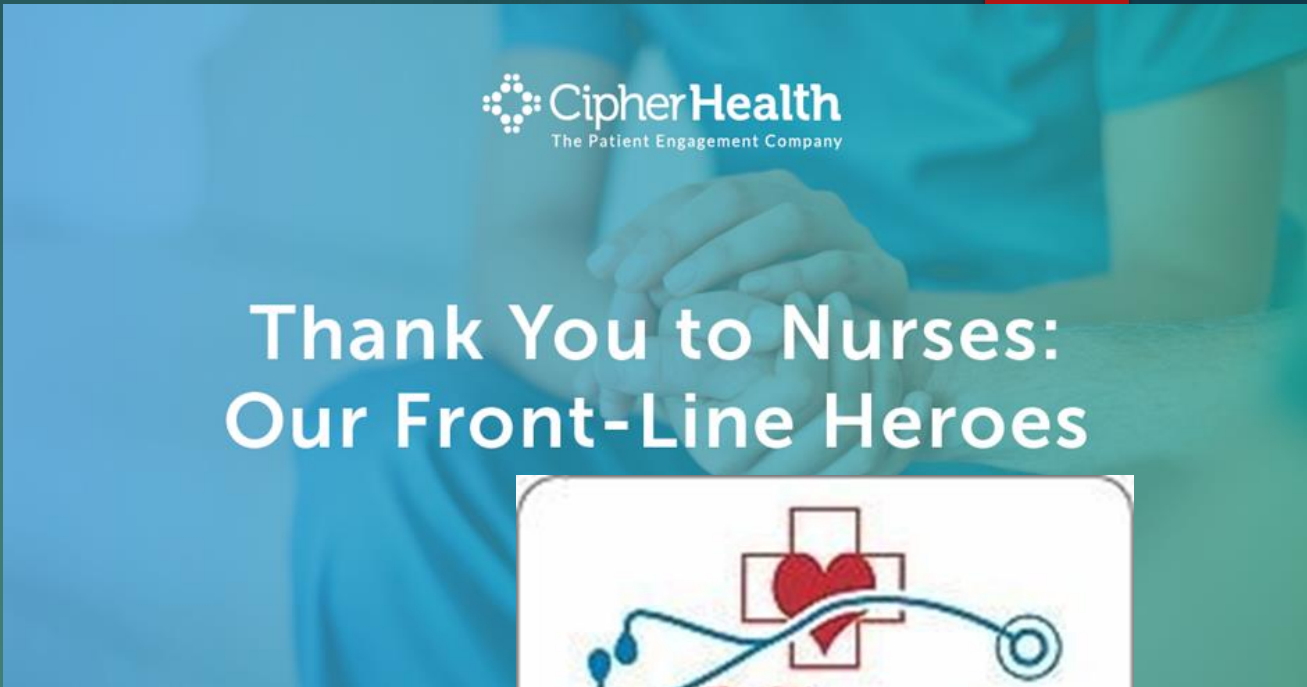


Objectives:

Explore critical care nurses' perceptions about how their role and professional identity has been constructed by the media and public during COVID-19

So what did we do?

- ▶ 23 critical care nurses
- ▶ UK, Australia and North America
- ▶ Recruited via Twitter
- ▶ Ethical approval University of Hull, UK and Bond University, Australia
- ▶ Single, semi-structured interviews via ZOOM / Skype / Teams
- ▶ October – December 2021
- ▶ BACCN research grant funding



What are your views on the following images and statements?

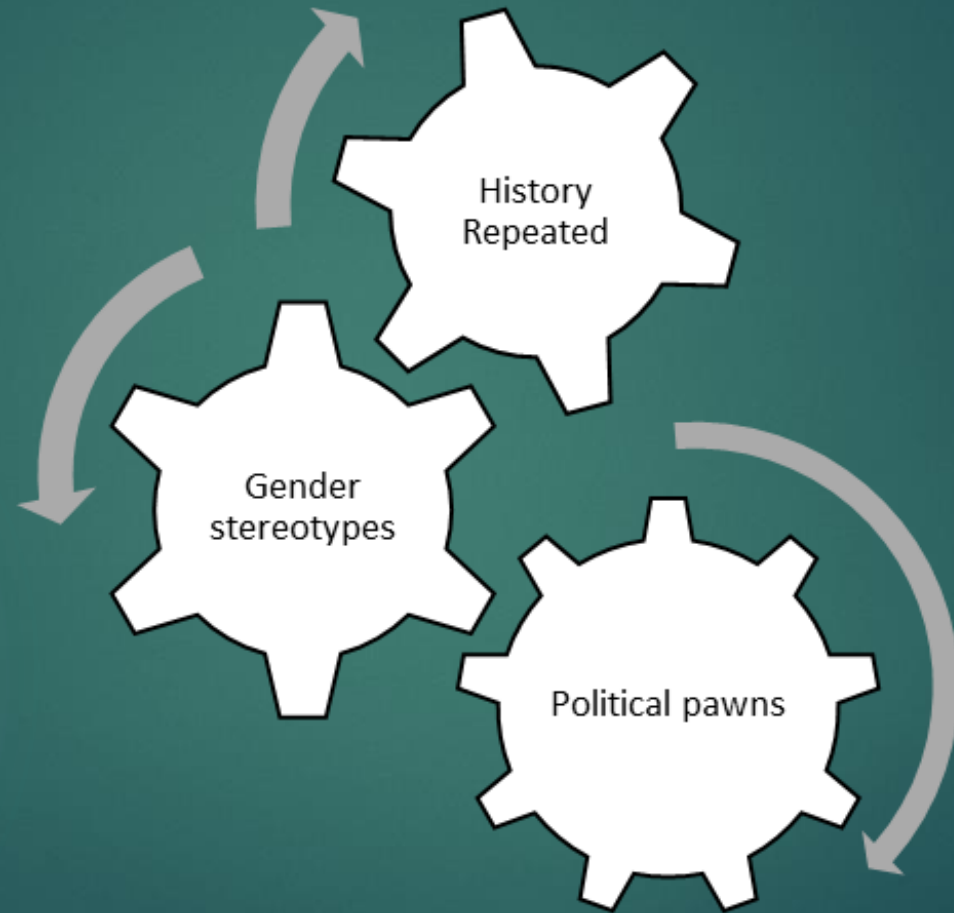
What do you understand by the terms “angels and heroes”?

How do these terms make you feel?

How do these terms influence the perception of the nurse / nursing?

What elements of the images do you identify with?

RESULTS



History repeating....

- ▶ The participants felt the title of angel, in particular, conjured ideas of being passive and submissive - which didn't portray their advocacy role in the ICU.
- ▶ They also didn't view themselves as pure or morally superior as Florence Nightingale would purport....

“I don’t think angels would have the dark humour...the dark ways of, of seeing the world. I don’t think that’s necessarily very angelic” (Participant 12)

“I think that the idea that nursing was a vocation that, you know, single women gave up their lives in the same way that they gave up their, you know, they became nuns in that same kind of idea...you’re so self-sacrificing to become a nurse” (Participant 1)

Gender Stereotypes

- ▶ The perception was that most media portrayals of nurses were white women, which did not adequately prioritise the importance of diversity in nursing.

"If you ask the public to physically describe a nurse, nine out of ten times I will guarantee they'd describe a woman" (Participant 5)

"Smile more" and "caregiver, mother, surrogate, make everything better...we'll take anything" (Participant 3)

Political Pawns

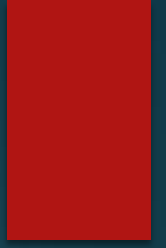
- ▶ The nurses interviewed described feeling dismissed and betrayed by both employers and politicians.
- ▶ There was an overwhelming sense of tokenism whereby on one day they were clapped for on the balcony, and then protested against on arrival on shift the next day.
- ▶ This created a sense of unsafe work places and had a negative impact on their sense of being valued

"they were saying oh we're heroes, giving free coffee...when you know, we were being worked to the bone" (Participant 7)

Key areas of interest

- ▶ Overall, nurses felt uncomfortable with the narrative and that it deflected from their skill and professionalism. It also detracted from their ability to practice safely and access adequate remuneration.
- ▶ The complex overlapping of history, gender and politics generated a sense of dismissal, disregard and diminishing the identity of critical care nurses throughout the pandemic.
- ▶ Despite this, the nurses interviewed expressed a strong sense of pride in their profession and expertise

Let's change the
narrative



Questions?

