

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH: IT RUNS IN THE FAMILY

Tara Romano
CIN Care Management Team Supervisor, RN

For many families, this may be a familiar story:

Women stayed on the home front as the men in our family worked for the same pipe insulation company, straight out of high school. This was my family's experience for a few decades.

Then came the opportunity for change, thanks to my grandmother. She changed the way women in my family think. She went to school to become a shorthand stenographer for our local court system.

While this occupation truly challenged her, she always felt that her strength and assertiveness could be used better in helping society in different ways.

She decided to put herself through nursing school which, at that time, was considered a vocation, not a profession.

My grandma did not stop there. Nursing, at the time, was a female-dominated field and as she looked around her, she felt that there was more ground to cover as a female in this growing workforce with increasing patient needs.

She became her union president and wrote publications on topics we now refer to as "evidence-based practice."

Her peers and teammates respected her to no end, as she was also the gritty nurse who was never afraid of change and was always willing to get her hands extra dirty during times when all hands on deck were needed.

In a time when the nation was male dominated, it seems that my grandma seemed to be a pioneer in her field due to her unrelenting perseverance to prove that she could always do better.

This mindset seems to have rubbed off on her daughter and her two grandchildren. My mom put herself through nursing school as a single parent, and I am proud to say I come from a familial line of nurses: my grandma, mom and cousin.

When asked why they became nurses, they said not only was it in them to help people, but they felt their life goal was to pursue professions for their own pride and satisfaction as women entering the workforce.

While my mom worked the day shift on an all-male geriatric unit, my grandmother worked nights in the same hospital on the psych unit. As I waited for my grandma to give her report to the incoming staff so she could whisk me off to school, I felt engulfed in an environment of compassion and curiosity about the patients and staff I observed around me.

As the years went by, I found myself volunteering as a candy striper rather than going to summer camps. As I volunteered, I learned how powerful the women around me were: nurses, nurses' aides, social workers, ward clerks, therapists. An all-female team with the same determination to work to make someone's day better.

While nursing started being recognized as a profession, my cousin and I both entered nursing school and earned our bachelor's degrees.

As we entered the workforce, we noticed there was a definitive shift in the profession. As I thrived in my love of nursing (cardiac nursing specifically), I started finding myself working alongside male nurses.

It was an unusual experience for me, But I openly embraced this pivotal time, truly appreciating a male in this female-dominated profession. I found that, as a team, we were able to collaborate to boost care delivery and elevate compassion and empathy for our patients to a higher level.
