

Get SMART

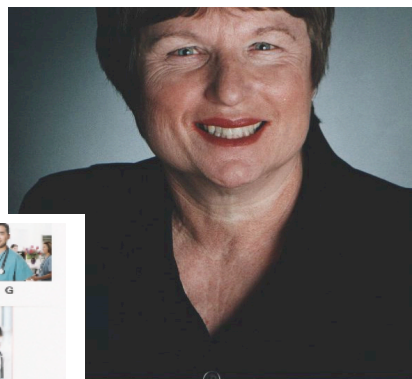
Veteran nurse has that advice
For doctors, administrators

By Michael Cleveland

Cabinet staff



The cover of June Fabre's book



AMHERST—The nursing profession is in trouble, but June Fabre says there is a way to fix the problem: Treat nurses with respect.

In her book, “Smart Nursing,” Fabre draws on her 40 years in the profession to warn about the critical shortage of nurses and explains how doctors and hospitals can benefit by improving their attitudes and making sure staffing is adequate.

“Use nurses’ heads...use their ability for critical thinking,” Fabre said in a recent interview. Doctors, she said, “need to be willing to delegate decision-making authority to nurses.

“Even a slight variation can lead to punishment. So things have to go up and down a long chain of command,” she said.

And, often the policies nurses must follow haven’t been updated for years.

“Nurses feel powerless,” Fabre said. “At times they are treated with disrespect by doctors and management, although that’s a small minority. It saps a nurse’s emotional energy to be treated with disrespect.

Staffing too can be a problem.

“A nurse could go to work and find out they are two people short, but they can’t put things off because patients need care in a timely way,” so the nurses have to do the best that they can,” Fabre said.

Fabre, who has lived in Amherst for 33 years, said that nurses can make mistakes when staffing is short, and that’s bad for the patient.

The problem became acute in the 1990s when hospitals responded to revenue cuts by cutting nursing staff.

“Staffing and the work environment are big problems,” Fabre said. “Nurses are human beings and they need a nice environment to do good work, to think, to solve patient problems.” But there are a lot of success stories in the nursing profession and her book details a number of them. She likens the book to, “sitting in on a series of talks, or even a year’s worth of mentoring chats...with a well-read, very seasoned nurse colleague.”

Fabre will elaborate on her ideas at the toadstool bookshop in Milford starting at 7 p.m. on Thursday, April 21.