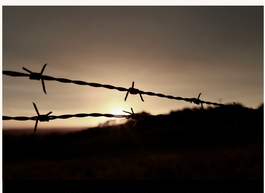

THE CORRECTIONAL NURSE

Inspiring

Professional Correctional Nursing Practice

October 2026

The Story We Tell About Correctional Nursing

On September 25, 2026, Medscape published an article on correctional nursing, and I was honored to be among those interviewed. It is not often that our specialty is featured for a broad healthcare audience.

The article touched on many realities we know well: staffing shortages, medication passes that can reach a hundred patients several times a day, and the constant work of balancing healthcare with security. The point that has stayed with me, though, was one I raised myself. Many nurses never consider corrections as a career, and there remains a perception that correctional nurses are somehow less skilled than their colleagues in other specialties.

Anyone who has worked a shift behind the wall knows how far that is from the truth. Registered nurse (RN) Tara Taylor, chief nursing officer for NaphCare, addressed this directly in the article. "One common misconception is that correctional nursing is not a specialty," she said. "In reality, it is a specialized nursing environment that requires nurses to combine clinical knowledge, keen assessment skills, compassion, safety awareness, and the ability to work independently." She is exactly right. Correctional nurses are frequently the first clinician to evaluate a patient, and sometimes the only one on site. We conduct sick call assessments and respond to emergencies. We recognize withdrawal before it becomes dangerous. We screen for suicide risk and manage chronic disease in patients who may not have seen a healthcare provider in years. We do all of this with limited diagnostic resources, often with a provider available only by phone.

As Ms. Taylor also observed, correctional nurses care for individuals during some of the most challenging moments of their lives. Meeting patients well in those moments depends on strong assessment skills, sound clinical judgment, and a clear understanding of our scope of practice. The American Nurses Association recognized this when it identified correctional nursing as a specialty with its own scope and standards of practice.

What outsiders rarely see is the professional skill it takes to deliver care inside a system whose primary mission is safety and security, not healthcare. That mission is real, and we respect it. Yet our obligation to our patients remains. Sometimes meeting it means going to the nursing supervisor, the sergeant, or the lieutenant because a patient needs to be seen and the unit is short-staffed. Knowing when to press, how to communicate the clinical concern clearly, and how to do it while preserving working relationships with our custody colleagues is not a lesser skill set. It is an advanced one, and one that nurses in most other settings never have to develop.

So where does the perception come from? Largely from the fact that our work happens out of sight. Most nurses have never been inside a jail or prison. Few nursing programs include correctional clinical rotations, and the public image of corrections rarely includes the healthcare happening within it. When people cannot see the work, assumptions fill the space.That means the most effective answer to the perception is us.

Every time we precept a new nurse, speak with nursing students, or talk with a hospital colleague who receives one of our patients, we have an opportunity to change the story. Recruitment is not solely the job of human resources. With nurses in short supply everywhere, the nurses who will choose corrections in the coming years are most likely to do so because someone they respect told them what this work is really like.

This Fall, as many of us gather at conferences and continue our daily work, I invite you to look for one opportunity to tell someone what correctional nursing actually involves. Describe a patient you helped, a condition you caught early, or a time you advocated for someone who needed care. You do not need a platform or a publication. You only need to be willing to speak with the same professional pride you bring to your practice.

Our specialty deserves to be understood. The people best positioned to explain it are the nurses who practice it every day.

Stay safe and stay well,
Lori

Newsworthy Notes

Upcoming Conferences

The WACHSA /Western Correctional Health Care Conference will be held in San Diego this year - October 21-23, 2026. Please join us in beautiful San Diego!

The National Commission on Correctional Health Care will hold its Fall Conference in Las Vegas, NV October 24-28, 2026.

The American Correctional Nurses Association will hold its Member Meeting on October 27, 2026 at the NCCHC Fall conference. Please join us for the installation of new officers, and appetizers.

The American Correctional Association will hold it's Winter Conference in Phoenix, Arizona January 7-10, 2027.

CorrectionalNurse.Net

This month at CorrectionalNurse.Net we will be discussing Clinical Decision making - chest pain and Things I Wish Someone had told me about Seizure Disorder. We will also have our reflection section.

As always, announcements for new blog posts will be posted on our FaceBook pages and on Instagram.

Please FOLLOW US and check back often to ensure that you get notification of new posts!

VISIT CORRECTIONALNURSE.NET NOW

Correctional Nurse Educator

This month our 50% off class is Laboratory Diagnostics for the Correctional Nurse.

New Learning Opportunities

Remember, The Correctional Nurse Educator will work with your group to provide quality, accredited continuing education classes at a discounted and affordable cost that are specifically for Correctional Nurses.

VISIT THE CORRECTIONAL NURSE EDUCATOR NOW

Nursing Behind the Wall

This month at **Nursing Behind the Wall** we will continue with our new format for the clinical judgment case scenarios for 2026 with the story of **Mr. Thompson, who is in early alcohol withdrawal.** Please take a minute and let me know your thoughts!

VISIT NURSING BEHIND THE WALL NOW

In closing, thank you for being part of this community and for taking the time to read this newsletter. I hope you continue to find our sites timely, practical, and meaningful to your work. Correctional nursing is a distinct specialty, often complex, frequently challenging, and critically important to the health and dignity of the patients we serve. The care you provide has a lasting impact, even when it goes unseen or unacknowledged. I have always been proud to say that I am a correctional nurse, and I hope you carry that same sense of professional pride in the vital work you do every day!

Lori

Inspiration

Correctional HealthCare Consultants LLC
San Diego, CA 92101
United States

CONTACT US

You received this email because you signed up on CorrectionalNurse.Net, Nursing Behind the Wall or The Correctional Nurse Educator. If you no longer wish to receive our emails, you may UNSUBSCRIBE below.

Unsubscribe