

## **Nevada Nurses Protest Use of the Title “Nurse” & “Naughty Nurse” Image**

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In order to become professional nurses, students work hard studying science, mathematics, social sciences, language, and the arts before applying to nursing school, usually against fierce competition. Students then spend two to three more demanding years to earn a degree in nursing. Then they take a national standardized examination to become licensed professional nurses. Next these healthcare providers spend years honing professional skills and critical thinking abilities to become superior healthcare providers and fierce patient advocates. Nursing is considered the “most honest and ethical” profession in Gallup polls year after year. Therefore, we hold the title “nurse” as reserved for those of us who have put in the sweat, tears, and effort to become the professionals that we are.

It is no wonder that professional nursing organizations such as the Arizona Nurses Association have strongly objected to the use of the title “nurse” when referring to food servers at the Heart Attack Grill (HAG) restaurant. A new location of the grill recently opened in downtown Las Vegas on Fremont Street. The HAG boasts food, drink, and cigarettes that are excessively bad for human health. Their signature meal is the “quadruple bypass” burger, french fries cooked in pure lard, and an extra butter-fat milkshake. Total calories for this gastric bombshell top 8,000.

The restaurant’s owner Jon Basso has refused demands by professional nursing organizations and the Arizona State Attorney General’s office to stop calling his food servers “nurses”. Mr. Basso also requires his food servers to wear scanty “nursing” uniforms, thus furthering the nurse image he uses to sell his high fat, sodium laden, extreme caloric menu items. His gimmicks, although considered harmless or fun to some, are an affront to those of us who take pride in our profession and in the title “nurse”. The Truth About Nursing, a national organization promoting a positive image for nursing, has repeatedly asked the HAG to stop using the naughty nurse image for its food servers. Research suggests that the “naughty nurse” image is detrimental to the nursing profession and contributes to chronic nursing challenges such as national nursing shortages, poor working conditions, severe underfunding of nursing research, and high nurse attrition rates. Mr. Basso has refused to comply with these requests as well.

About twenty nurses, nursing students, friends of nurses (and even a respiratory therapist!) joined together on November 12, 2011 to protest the HAG’s flippant use of the nurse title and the promotion of the naughty nurse image. The peaceful group gathered in front of the HAG, distributed information about the dangers of the naughty nurse image to our profession, and answered questions about the nursing profession for passersby. Many people were surprised that the HAG would use the term nurse to describe food servers who were obviously not nurses, and agreed that the food servers’ uniforms were inappropriate. I commend these nursing supporters for making a stand on this issue since sadly, taking action when our profession is

slandered and disrespected is something nurses often do not do. This stance by nurses in Nevada is certainly a positive step towards improving the status and condition of nurses in Nevada and nationwide.

. Nurses can show support for the nursing profession by joining the Nevada Nurses Association ([www.nvnurses.org](http://www.nvnurses.org)), the American Nurses Association ([www.nursingworld.org](http://www.nursingworld.org)), and other professional organizations such as The Truth About Nursing ([www.truthaboutnursing.org](http://www.truthaboutnursing.org)). Lobbying legislators on issues important to nursing and patient care is another positive action we can all do. By writing letters or emails, or calling or visiting representatives we can make our voices heard. A little political activism goes a long way. A single letter to a member of congress is seen to represent the shared opinion of about 10,000 constituents!