The major potential downside to the book is its intensely personal focus: Pronovost’s role dominates. First-person pronouns are rampant, although I can only assume that this apparent self-importance is due to his co-author’s writing style, as Pronovost personally does not project this image at all. The book’s focus on the singular importance of Johns Hopkins will put off some medical professionals from other institutions that are also effectively engaged in the patient safety movement. On balance, though, Safe Patients, Smart Hospitals is a must-read for those involved or even interested in the patient safety movement and the improvements being implemented in quality of care today.

In Superbug, McKenna uses riveting stories of patients and medical teams struggling with the emergence of a new and accelerating microbiological threat over the past 50 years. The result is a chronology of the effects of medical tunnel vision and hubris when confronting a new disease.

We all know these attitudes exist and interfere with rapid adoption of needed change. By weaving together the emergence and transmission of antibiotic resistance and the spread of pathogen strains between hospitals and communities, McKenna illustrates the continuing need for healthy skepticism of medical dogma.

Clearly, she has listened to criticisms aimed at her previous book, Beating Back the Devil (2008), that chided her for lack of emotion and poor editing in her tales of the Epidemic Intelligence Services, health professionals who travel around the world to investigate public health threats. The stories McKenna relates in Superbug are both clearly written and frightening!

The intended audience appears to be lay readers, but medical professionals would also benefit — they need to see themselves more clearly as the public sees them. Superbug is a fast read, but it stirs the emotions with stories of devastating outcomes. Both lay and medical professional readers will come away with a better understanding of the evolution of superbugs, the problem of change for practitioners and the high threat level of MRSA and other superbugs today. If it does no more than make readers more sensitized to the current misuse of antibiotics and its terrible secondary effects, this book rewards the reading time.

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WATERING THE SEEDS OF NURSING’S SPIRIT

REVIEW BY JAMES DAVIS, RN, M.S.N.

I agreed to read and review Inspired Nurse by Rich Bluni, RN, with a bit of a bias that it might be an infomercial for the Studer Group, a consulting firm for health care organizations. I know of the Studer approach because some of our facilities use it to help manage the patient experience. Bluni is a coach for Studer, and he is certainly transparent about his work and about the positive influence his engagement with the Studer Group has had on his practice and his life. My skepticism melted away as my heart opened to the power and simplicity of the stories, the practices and the “spiritual stretches” that are organized into a journey of inspiration, a journey that helps nurses to reconnect with both the personal and the universal call of the healer.

Nursing requires a strong spirit. Being fully present, holding the space for the full range of experiences inherent in healing that engages the mind, body and spirit of the patient and the caregiver, requires self-care. Nurses must find their own path to the physical, emotional, and spiritual hardiness that support the demands of living a full personal life and the serving and self-giving they are called to that heals patients and families.

Inspired Nurse embraces the hazards of cynicism, moral distress, compassion fatigue and other forms of burnout with optimism, affirmation and inspiration. The practices are grounded in well-established contemplative and integrative exercises. Bluni draws on his own considerable nursing experience to draw the reader in and
spark poignant memories that can get lost in the chaos and pace of delivering care. The exercises all point to the power of service through presence and self-giving as well as the inspiration and spiritual strengthening available through intentional remembering, storytelling, engaging the spirit and journaling. Bluni lays out powerful and practical strategies in short chapters with “spiritual stretches” and journal prompts. I found myself laughing, crying, and mostly remembering why I deeply love the profession of nursing.

Working as a nurse in Catholic health care has allowed me to align my own value structure and the philosophy and values of nursing with organizational mission and values. Reverence for the dignity of every human person, a special compassion for the sick, poor and vulnerable and especially holism in care and relationships were and are my source of inspiration and passion.

As a leader for mission, I seek orientation and ongoing formation practices for associates that allow personal, professional and organizational values to converge and inspire. Engaging a pluralistic and diverse community of nurses and caregivers in formation that supports integration of mind, body and spirit in care delivery and in relationships requires authenticity, practicality and a connection to the spirit. I believe the Inspired Nurse experience can provide this very kind of formation. The book is designed to provide individual nurses or groups of nurses with specific strategies that help them to remember and savor the experiences that have formed them so they can harvest the inspiration that comes from connection to meaning and purpose.

In Catholic health care, we search for ways to water the seeds of the spirit in all those who serve our patients and families. Inspired Nurse engages the importance of the spirit and the sacred encounters between nurse and patients and between caregivers. The author does this in a sensitive and welcoming way so that regardless of faith tradition — or no tradition — the underlying love that is the ground for the call to heal can inspire and energize.

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