

HIGHWAY HYPODERMICS:

On The Road Again

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By

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Highway Hypodermics:
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Dedicated to:

All the traveling nurses who spend thirteen weeks at a time in a place far away from home— the nurses who are changing healthcare in America one hospital at a time.

All the traveling companies who have supported the Highway Hypodermics book series and website...and especially to those companies who provide great quality service to traveling nurses.

Last, but not least, to my house-husband / home manager / healthcare support team. Thank you for not griping about the dirty dishes and dusty house, taking time to pay the bills, and letting me drag you around the United States all because I love being a traveling nurse and author!

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Chapter One

The Changing Face of Travel Nursing

Have you seen the price at the gas pumps lately? In July 2006 gas was \$2.75 a gallon, and today it's averaging \$3.75 a gallon. On my first travel assignment in 2003 I paid rent of \$600/month; for the assignment I'm just about to leave on (in 2008), my total housing costs over \$1000/month.

I am starting to see a few changes in the economic status of some travel companies, but surprisingly, most of companies I have talked to say that there are still plenty of jobs.

It seems that the biggest change is to the nurses themselves with their traveling costs. My question is, if the costs are getting higher for the nurses, who is paying for the extra expenses, or are we just not traveling as often? The hospitals definitely are not...a lot of them struggled to make it before the economical down-slump. I'm really surprised that we haven't seen more of a drop in the amount of travel nursing jobs out there. From my research, it appears that the number of nurses staying at home is directly proportional to the number of jobs that are available.

What nurses have to realize is that there is just so much money that the travel companies are allowed to give out of the bill-rate, and unfortunately, the bill-rates are not going up. I truly believe that most of the companies are doing their best to ease the pain, but the hospitals are not giving out more money to cover some of the additional costs.

What companies have to realize is that it is getting harder and harder to make a living on the road with all the added expenses related to traveling fulltime, especially if you love to make those across-the-country jaunts! Two months ago I came home to Idaho from my assignment in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, and it cost me \$1000.00 for the trip just for the gas. Depending on where your assignment is, that is a paycheck or two just for traveling expenses.

What are the true effects? The hospital's need for traveling nurses will decline as it is related to more traveling nurses staying at home and doing per diem, but for those of us who stay out on the road there will be plenty of jobs left due to less nurses wanting those jobs. I also see that the higher wages that traveling nurses make over the staff nurse is being eaten up in traveling costs. I can definitely see more nurses taking twenty-six week contracts instead of just thirteen-week contracts and traveling closer to home.

It may be a little bumpy on the road and we might even see a washboard effect when the government tries to fix things, but there will always be dedicated traveling nurses and dedicated traveling companies that will carry on until they find the pavement and head down the smooth highway of travel nursing once again.

Through educating yourself with this book and the resources mentioned in this book you can have a very profitable travel nursing career, not only financially but personally, you can bring a wealth of information to other nurses who would like the freedom that travel nursing brings.

My Start as a Traveling Nurse

From the moment I became a nurse in 1992 until I hit the road in 2003, I had always dreamed of being a traveling nurse. It was in a small nursing home in Oklahoma that I met my first travel nurse from South Dakota. The stories that she would tell! They were all full of excitement and it seemed like there was never a dull moment.

It was then that I planned my strategy for becoming a traveling nurse by getting as much experience as I could in all the different areas of nursing. I started working long-term care, then I progressed to medical, surgical, rehab, psych, and eventually into the emergency room.

All this time, I was waiting on my son to graduate from school so we could go on the road, until one day the school counselor told me that he didn't know what he was going to do with my son next year. I looked at

my husband, then back at the counselor and told him that I didn't think that he was going to have to worry about my son. I turned in my two-weeks notice at work and we notified the state of Arizona of our intent to home school our child, and off to Phoenix from Lake Havasu City we went.

That was in 2003 and we haven't once looked back. Since then we have been to California, back to Arizona, Oklahoma, Mississippi, Iowa, Florida, Tennessee, Washington (where my son stayed since he turned 18), Oregon, and South Carolina. The first of November my healthcare support assistant (hubby) and I are starting a new assignment in the state of Texas. We have been through earthquakes in California, a gas pipeline crisis in Arizona, missed the tornado in Iowa and Tennessee, and survived one of the worst snow storms of the decade in the Seattle area. I wouldn't trade a minute of it for a staff nurse job! I can't wait to see what Texas will bring!

Anyway, back to 2003. At that time I already had two published novels (*Love At First Type* and *Crazy Thoughts of Passion*), and the minute I started traveling I started gathering information from travel companies and from older travelers. Instead of keeping all of that information to myself I started the website Highway Hypodermics and immediately started putting together *Highway Hypodermics: Your Road to Travel Nursing*, which was published in January 2005.

In January 2007, Star Publish and I put out the second edition, *Highway Hypodermics: Travel Nursing 2007*. In that edition there was a lot of information added about the PBDS test, JCAHO, homeschooling and traveling with family.

Well, it's September 2008 now, and here I am with the my third "Highway Hypodermics" book, which has the subtitle of "On The Road Again." This edition has a lot of the things that were in the 2007 edition, with the added aspects of traveling as an LPN/LVN, Allied Health traveling, and travel nursing when you are coming from other countries. All of the nursing stories are new and the travel company profiles have been updated, including several new companies!

Travel Nursing Goals

Living the dream... As I traveled the Oregon Coast last summer I was reminded about how fortunate I am to be living the dream of traveling across the United States and seeing some of the most awesome landscapes in the world. It leads me to wonder what dreams other traveling nurses have and how they are accomplishing their goals.

My first dream when I got into this profession was to travel along the Pacific Coast Highway in my Mustang convertible. Although I don't have the Mustang any longer, I did make it down the California coast with it before the engine gave out. When I was on assignment in Washington state, I finally completed my Highway 1/101 loop from the Seattle area around the Washington State peninsula all the way down to San Diego.

As I was discussing my travel plans with some of the other travel nurses that I work with, one of them mentioned that they have a goal of visiting all the national parks in the United States.

Other simple travel goals are to tour the coasts for lighthouses or covered bridges.

Other nurses have goals of seeing their grandchildren, being close to other family members, or finding a new place to live.

Are you just roaming around the United States, or do you have goals? If not, I challenge you to write you down some short term-goals and long-term goals.

My short-term goal was to travel the Pacific Coast highway. In the long run, I want to travel through all of the states. As of writing this, I still lack the states east of Wisconsin and the states North of Maryland.

The Baby Boomers

The age of the baby boomer is upon us and as these middle-aged Americans age, so does the demand for nurses to take care of them. The only problem with this demand is the supply, since not as many young men and women are entering the field of nursing as a career.

The median age for nurses in a 1990 study was about forty-five. Not that these nurses are invaluable in their more experienced years, but who is going to take their place when they decide to retire and travel fulltime without having to work?

In today's society the numbers of retiring nurses outnumber the nurses who are graduating from nursing school by 20%. I also know plenty of more experienced nurses who now use their knowledge to the best of their ability by consulting. Just because they are older and their legs don't work so well after forty years of running up and down hallways doesn't mean that their brain is lame also!

Working Conditions

After all, why would someone want to go into a profession where you are begged to work overtime so you can hear from the families a confirmation of the fact that nurses don't have time to take care of patients the way they should. Families are, however, somewhat more tolerant of it because they know that "all hospitals are short-staffed."

Why would you want to run around "like a chicken with its head cut off" for six hours before you get time to stop long enough to get a drink, go to the restroom, and grab a sandwich on your way back because we can't waste time for lunch? That abscess has to be drained!

Why would someone want to get into a profession where your feet are abused by all the long hours spent traipsing down the corridors of illness? If you are not one of the lucky ones to marry a foot masseur, you'd better learn self-message techniques and get some comfortable shoes.

Why would anyone want to spend time wiping butts, giving enemas, taking blood, then giving some back, cleaning up vomit, and my personal favorite—cleaning up that stringy sputum!

I am expected to work long hours, contend with ridiculous staffing circumstances, be treated like a dog by the administration, be yelled at by the physicians while dodging the clipboard, and be ridiculed by my nursing colleagues because I am definitely not working as hard as they are and I am not as good as they are.

I never could understand the old saying, "Nurses always eat their young," but that is what exactly we do. The new graduates are inexperienced and "stupid" because they haven't been around the block like we have, but I drag myself out of bed at 4:00 a.m. every morning because I care about the patients I take care of. I don't know why anybody wouldn't want to live the dream of being a nurse!

Career nurses are nurses because we are dedicated to our profession—because we really are concerned about patient care and the health of others. It is just hard to convey to someone else that this profession really does have its high points. If only they could see the patient's son who gives us a hug because we took care of his mother so well as she slipped from this life to the next. If only they could visit with the patient who went into ventricular fibrillation before my eyes and told me "thank you" ten minutes after I had defibrillated her. Making a difference in someone else's life—that, my friend is what nursing is all about.

Another concern for professional nurses is the issue of mandatory overtime. My colleague Melissa James stated, "After working a twelve-hour day shift at the nursing home, the night shift nurse called in. I was then informed by the director of nursing that I would stay or be turned into the state for patient abandonment."

Once being coerced into working those extra shifts, the nurses recognize in their hearts that they should not be touching syringes, handing out medications, or providing medical treatment, but they carry on as instructed because they have a family to feed at home and a nursing license to protect.

Investigative reports show that insomnia has some bearing on more than just a few aspects of nursing implementation, leading to sluggish responses, delayed reaction times, failure to make a start when appropriate, erroneous functions, decelerated thoughts, and a diminished recollection of nursing actions already performed.

Another factor influencing the nursing shortage is the increase of government interventions. With the rules and regulations of Medicare, medical treatment is ruled by money, not by patient need. This also is a factor with insurance entities, including HMOs, PPOs, and private insurance.

The patient's length of stay is governed by the patient's DRG (Diagnostic Related Group). If you have a hernia surgery, the government, not the physicians, tell you when your time is up. As a nurse, this bothers me terribly, because I see repeat patients that should have been taken care of longer the first time, who have been discharged only to return two weeks later with a severe infection and wound dehiscence.

Who wants to work with people who have new diseases like vancomycin resistance enterococci (VRE), methicillin resistance staphylococcus aureus (MRSA), AIDS, HIV, tuberculosis, hepatitis, and other life-threatening contagious diseases?

Educational Factor

It does take money and time to get a nursing education. You find yourself having to work at least part-time and fitting study time in at 10:00 p.m. after everyone else is tucked in.

The year I went to nursing school I drove an hour and fifteen minutes to school, stayed all day at school, and then drove back home. Once home, I would change into my nursing assistant uniform just in time to help feed thirty patients and put them to bed. It was only after my job was finished that I went home and studied. Working only four hours a day meant a major cut in pay, but I worked the weekends also to bring home enough money to pay the bills and keep my insurance by working at least thirty-two hours in a week.

Even if you do find the money to attend nursing school, thousands of potential nursing students are turned down from nursing schools every year, not because they aren't smart or can't make the grade, but because there is no one to teach them. The fact of the matter is that a staff nurse with an associate's degree makes much more than a teaching nurse with a master's degree.

According to www.salary.com, a staff nurse in my hometown makes an average of \$54,479, while an Instructor of Nursing makes \$42,408. That is a 33% decrease in salary after you go to school for four more years. What part of this makes sense? It doesn't, and that is why we can't get good instructors in our colleges to help provide more nurses for the working world.

Legal groups are in the process of advocating better salaries and benefits for nursing instructors. These groups are involved in the long process of working with state and federal government to pass laws that will give additional money to schools to increase the salaries of teachers. Health-related corporations have campaigns to encourage people to go into nursing and supply scholarships. Other schools are networking with more hospitals to make room to educate nurses; still, not enough is being done to help make a big difference in bringing nurses into the field.

Burn Out and Job Satisfaction

Burn-out in nursing is very common. Nurses get in a rut of working the same hospital for years and years and get to the point of being so stressed out that they start to blame others for things that go wrong, have a depressed affect, feel very irritable and frustrated all the time, and even have a short temper, a sense of powerlessness, and a very negative attitude about their work. They hate their work, and they literally have to "drag" themselves to work everyday.

What makes the situation even worse is that for the every one burned-out nurse there are three others that are around her. The burnout feeds itself into a raging fire that can destroy a unit and a nurse if it isn't carefully contained. Nurses are very dissatisfied in their jobs, and misery loves company. Soon staff morale is at an all-time low.

As a traveling nurse, things change with enough frequency that you don't get burned out, related to the fact that a fire can't get to raging stage if you are moving your fire every thirteen weeks. It doesn't have a chance to grow from a small campfire into a gigantic bonfire.

If you don't like the position you are in, travel nurses can just pick up camp and move on. Staff nurses have a tendency to stay in the same job for years and fight the burnout because they have settled into that geographical location because of family or friends. Most commonly, the way out is to leave the hospital or clinical situation and go into management, education, home health, or a physician's office. When they leave the floor, the nursing shortage then increases.

Conclusion

Let's face it, without a nursing shortage there would not be travel nursing. I'm all for better patient care and easing the nursing shortage, and that is why I take my turn helping out those hospitals in need. I don't get bored in the same old routine because I change hospitals, and even floors, every three to six months. No, travel nursing is not for everyone, but after reading this book you can make a more informed decision on whether or not travel nursing is right for you.

LaRue Tradition That Shall Not Be Broken...

“Love At First Type”
Published January 2001

“Crazy Thoughts Of Passion”
Published January 2003

“Highway Hypodermics: Your Road To Travel Nursing”
Published January 2005

“Highway Hypodermics: Travel Nursing 2007”
Published January 2007

“Crazy Thoughts Of An Online Romance”
Published January 2008

“Highway Hypodermics: On The Road Again”
Published January 2009

“Highway Hypodermics: Travel Nursing 2011”
Scheduled To Be Published January 2011

Love At First Type: An Online Romance Based On A True Story

Paperback: 156 pages
Publisher: Booksurge Publishing (January, 2001)
Out Of Print

Nurse Kathy's life was changed when she met Jack over the internet. They are not only separated by 1000 miles, but also 24 years! They find themselves chatting more and more each day. Soon they begin to contemplate the idea of making their romance a reality. The odds are against them...

Can they make an Internet Romance an everlasting Reality Romance? Is it worth going against all those odds? Is there really such a thing as *Love At First Type*?

~*~

"*Love At First Type* is a story that tugs at your heart strings and makes you a true believer of romance - and that soul mates will find each other no matter what. I could not put this book down. I had to keep reading to see what happened next to "Sassy" and "Repairmen." I highly recommend it to anyone who has ever thought about having an online relationship." *Kristie Leigh Maguire, author of award winning romance novels, "Desert Heat", and "Cabin Fever"*

"...LaRue spins a tale that will capture the reader in the first sentence and will keep them spell bound til the end." *Kim Roberts, author of "Everlasting" and "A Chance Worth Taking."*

"... LaRue is a promising new talent."
Brenda Bailey, Literary Agent

Crazy Thoughts Of Passion

Paperback: 98 pages
Publisher: Booksurge Publishing (January, 2003)
Out Of Print

Kaitlyn Malloy is a registered nurse with her hands full at Madison Acute Geriatric-Psychiatric Hospital. The newly admitted Gladys Rosanthol had been brought into the hospital with an acute maniac episode. Kaitlyn had no other choice but to give her an anti-anxiety medication.

Lance Rosanthol was stupefied when he saw his mother. She wasn't just relaxed; she was comatose! He is taking his mother out of that crazy hospital, and he doesn't care what that Nurse Malloy says!

Kaitlyn certainly didn't need anyone questioning her nursing capabilities! But why did crazy thoughts of passion keep entering her mind every time that she looked at Mrs. Rosanthol's handsome son? Naturally, nursing ethics complicates this situation. She definitely doesn't need him to complicate her life!

~*~

...A short book, *Crazy Thoughts of Passion* is big on characters and ideas, it's almost as if you are facing the dilemmas with Kaitlyn and wondering what you would do in that same situation. An easy read, the book's pages

seem to turn themselves. ...A must for any romance fan. *Reviewed by Annette Gisby, author of "Silent Screams" and "Shadows of the Rose."*

...Ms. LaRue's own experience as a nurse lends an aura of realism to this poignant romance. You will fall in love right along with these two wonderful people who must first deal with modern life before they can indulge their "Crazy Thoughts of Passion." *Reviewed by Kathleen Walls, Author of Last Step and Georgia's Ghostly Getaways*

Highway Hypodermics: Your Road Map To Travel Nursing

Paperback: 156 pages

Publisher: Star Publish (January, 2005)

www.starpublishllc.com

ISBN: 1932993169

Highway Hypodermic by Epstein LaRue may be a one-of-a-kind book. That is a rarity but apparently true. After a search on Amazon and a couple of other online bookstores, I found nothing currently in print on the subject of making nursing-on-wheels a career.

LaRue says she wrote this book so that a professional nurse “can make an informed decision about your career change into travel nursing.” But Highway Hypodermics will also be valuable for anyone considering a nursing career of any kind for Larue doesn't mince words. She tells all she knows about the distractions, difficulties and benefits of becoming any kind of a nurse as well as fully informing readers about a nursing niche that few others could tell them about.

LaRue's strength is twofold. She speaks from experience--lots of it--and she speaks in a casual, straight-from-the-heart voice. Her honesty is impeccable. My favorite chapters are those in which she reveals her own journals. By doing so, she opens a window on her world--both personal and in terms of her chosen career. We often look to memoir to learn more about ourselves; perhaps all those considering nursing will find it an advantage to do that before they choose this difficult but rewarding field. By combining this mirror to her life in a how-to book, LaRue offers up a nursing guide like no other.

Reviewed by Carolyn Howard-Johnson is the award-winning author of This is the Place and Harkening: A Collection of Stories Remembered. The Frugal Book Promoter: How to Do What Your Publisher Won't was just named USA Book News "Best Books of 2004." Award. Learn more at <http://carolynhowardjohnson.com/> Contact Reviewer: HoJoNews@aol.com

Highway Hypodermics: Travel Nursing 2007

Paperback: 372 pages

Publisher: Star Publish (January, 2007)

ISBN: 1932883657

Whether snow skiing in Idaho, viewing the sunset from helicopter pad on the top of a hospital in Arizona, gazing at covered bridges in Vermont, or taking a long walk on the beach in Florida, travel nursing is an excellent way to get paid while exploring the United States. Although Highway Hypodermics: Your Road Map To Travel Nursing was written in 2005 with some great information about travel nursing, the next edition, Highway Hypodermics: Travel Nursing 2007, brings expanded knowledge about the field of travel nursing. Not only do you get the basics of travel nursing, but additional information is provided on the rewards and drawbacks of travel nursing and making the decision to travel, expanded knowledge on what travel companies are all about and how to choose the right one, all about JCAHO certification, which destinations are the best and how to choose a destination, information on traveling in a recreational vehicle, home-schooling your child while on the road, and additional information on licensing requirements, not to mention all you would ever need to know about travel nursing and your taxes.

Crazy Thoughts Of An Online Romance

Paperback: 320 pages

Publisher: Star Publish (January, 2008)

ISBN: 1932993851

A fictional nursing duet: Crazy Thoughts of Passion (originally published in 2003) and Love At First Type: On Online Romance, Based On A True Story (originally published in 2001) with the added NEVER RELEASED Epstein's Guide To Online Romance. In Book One, Nurse Kathy's life was changed when she met Jack over the internet. They are not only separated by 1000 miles, but also 24 years! They find themselves chatting more and more each day. Soon they begin to contemplate the idea of making their romance a reality. The odds are against them... Can they make an Internet Romance an everlasting Reality Romance? Is it worth going against all those odds? Is there really such a thing as Love At First Type? In Book Two, Kaitlyn Malloy is a registered nurse with her hands full at Madison Acute Geriatric-Psychiatric Hospital. Lance Rosanthol has a mother who is having anxiety attacks, but the real panic starts when sparks ignite a passionate fire between Lance and Kaitlyn. Naturally, nursing ethics complicates this situation. An intriguing look at nursing, ethics, romance, and. Crazy Thoughts Of Passion.

Got Nurses?

Understanding The Traveling Nurse In Effort To Retain Nurses

The travel nursing industry is growing at an extremely accelerated rate in the last five years. Once there were only a handful of staffing companies, today there are over 200 companies that specialize in travel nursing. The task of finding out what nurses want and supplying their needs has become an ever so daunting.

Recruiting nurses to join your organization is tough enough without adding the chore of retaining the nurses once you have got them on your team. With a little understanding of what nurses want, how to read their personalities, and how to treat them, you're job just got a little easier.

"Got Nurses" is a one hour program developed by Epstein LaRue as a tool to give travel companies a peak into the world of travel nursing from the other side.

~*~

"As new employees to the travel industry, we thoroughly enjoyed reading Highway Hypodermics: Your Road Map to Travel Nursing and listening to the program, "Got Nurses?" Epi gives a better understanding to what a healthcare traveler is looking for which is a necessity for any good recruiter. She captures the adventures and advantages of Healthcare Traveling from a traveling nurse's perspective. The "Got Nurses" program combined with the "Highway Hypodermic" book series has astronomical value to a travel nursing company!"

Trinity Healthcare Staffing Group – Recruitment Team

~*~

For more information about this one hour inservice contact Epstein at: highwayhypo@yahoo.com

Websites of Interest:

www.highwayhypodermics.com

Epstein's travel nursing homepage where you will find up-to-date information about travel nursing companies, hospitals, and more stories from traveling nurses.

www.epsteinlarue.com

Epstein LaRue's author homepage full of valuable information about her books, medical consulting for writer's, and tips on how for you to get started in a profitable writing career.

www.travelnursinghighway.blogspot.com

Travel nursing blog where Traveling nurses can come together and discuss the everyday adventures of travel nursing and find out more information.

www.myspace.com/nurse_epi

Epstein's MySpace page

groups.myspace.com/TravelNursingAlliance

health.groups.yahoo.com/group/highwayhypodermics/

Epstein's MySpace and Yahoo groups from which her eZine announcements are made.

forums.delphiforums.com/travelnurses/

A community of past, present, and future traveling nurses who support each other in an amazing forum.

www.ultimatenurse.com

Another great website forum for traveling nurses with company and hospital reviews also.

www.pantravelers.org

The Professional Association of Nurse Travelers a non-profit organization, exists to serve the interests of all healthcare travelers.

Who Is Epstein LaRue?

The writing world calls her Epstein LaRue, but reality calls her "Kay." No matter what you know her by, she is a lady of many talents. She has been a nurse since 1992, and has worked on medical, surgical, emergency, telemetry, rehabilitation, and psychiatric units.

In January 2001, Epstein's first book, "Love At First Type: An Online Romance Based On A True Story," was published. This fictional novel is about how she and her husband met online. This book was recently requested by an independent filmmaker for possible production in the near future.

In January 2003 her second book, "Crazy Thoughts Of Passion" was released. It is a fictional medical romance about a nurse who falls in love with a patient's son.

In January 2005 her third and most successful book, "Highway Hypodermics: Your Road Map To Travel Nursing" was published. Although only on the road for two years, everything that she learned in those two years was put into the book. In September of 2005, this book was recognized by USA Book News as one of the top finalist for professional book of the year.

In January 2007 (can you see the trend yet....) "Highway Hypodermics: Travel Nursing 2007" was released by Star Publish (www.starpublishllc.com). This book soared up the charts on Amazon and made it to Number One three times in the Nursing, Trends, Issues and Roles category.

In January 2008, Epstein put together her first two novels, "Love At First Type" and "Crazy Thoughts Of Passion" together with her new publisher in "Crazy Thoughts Of An Online Romance."

Other recent accomplishments include having her article, "Top 10 Reasons To Love Travel Nursing" published in one of nursing's most prestigious magazines, Nursing2004. She was also named as a Traveler of the Year by Healthcare Traveler magazine in December 2005, and in 2008 she had three articles published by "ORNursing2008."

LaRue keeps herself busy during the month by publishing a monthly eZine about travel nursing, "Highway Happenings" and leading a group of authors who do things "Not The Usual Way" commonly referred as the NUW Author Community (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/NUW/>).

Travel nursing is a dream that has become a reality. She currently spends her summer at her home office in Idaho freelance writing and working per-diem, and continues to travel south in winter with her husband. Step into her world and shoot yourself down the road with Highway Hypodermics.