Presentation: Welcome to today's episode of medi-chat. Today we will be continuing our series on the different professions in health care and we are joined by Mary Jones, a staff nurse from Birmingham Hospital. Hello Mary.

Mary: Hello, thank you for having me on the program.

P: Thank you for joining us. Now to get us started, could you tell our listeners a little bit about why you became a nurse.

M: Well, I always wanted to work in health care and nursing seemed like a good fit for me. I originally planned to train as a midwife, but I decided that I liked the variety of treating and dealing with different kinds of patients.

P: What do you mean by a good fit?

M: I like working with people and being a nurse allows me to interact with a lot of patients in one day. I also feel like I am making a difference as I am giving direct care.

P: I imagine it is quite demanding working so closely with patients.

M: Yes, it can be but it is also very rewarding when you get to help a patient from the time of admission right through until when they are discharged.

P: Yes, that must give you a great feeling. But what are your actual duties? How do you help patients?

M: Ha, that would be a very long answer as every day is different but my main duty is assisting doctors and monitoring patients. This may be collecting specimens from patients or administering medicine which was prescribed by the doctor.

P: You mean giving out pills and tablets?

M: Well, that is part of it - but often medication is through an intravenous drip, so I have to place the needle in the patient's arm and make sure that the drip is flowing properly.

P: I see. So which duty do you enjoy most?

M: Actually, it may sound strange but I think I like to educate patients more than anything else. We get a lot of patients who end up in hospital as a result of poor lifestyle, so as well as treating them my personal challenge is to show them how to avoid a return trip. It is really satisfying when someone says something like: 'Ok, I'll stop smoking'.
P: Does that happen very often?

M: Unfortunately not, I do seem to spend most of my time drawing blood or changing dressings. You know, the routine stuff.

P: And what about the worst part of the job?

M: That is easy, being in the room when the doctor informs the patient or their family that the condition is terminal. My charge nurse said that it gets easier with time, but I still find it very distressing.

P: Yes, I can imagine. So I assume you need to be quite strong emotionally to do your job.

M: Definitely.

P: Are there any other important characteristics that a potential nurse should have?

M: Yes, as we spend a lot of time around patients who are going through a hard time - a good bedside manner is essential. You must remember that these are people with feelings. You also need to be decisive as you often have very little time to choose the correct response to a patient's situation.

P: It sounds very difficult.

M: It is, and actually that is something that does annoy me - a lot of people just don't realize how hard it is to be a nurse and in fact doctors sometimes look down on us.

P: Well, I for one appreciate the work done by nursing professionals. The last time I was in hospital I was fortunate enough to have a very good nurse, and it really did make the whole experience much less frightening. Thank you for telling us about your job.

**Discussion Questions**

What other nursing duties do you know of?

What qualities do think are important in a good nurse?

Why do you think nurses are often less respected than doctors?