

# The Nurse's Role in Patient Safety

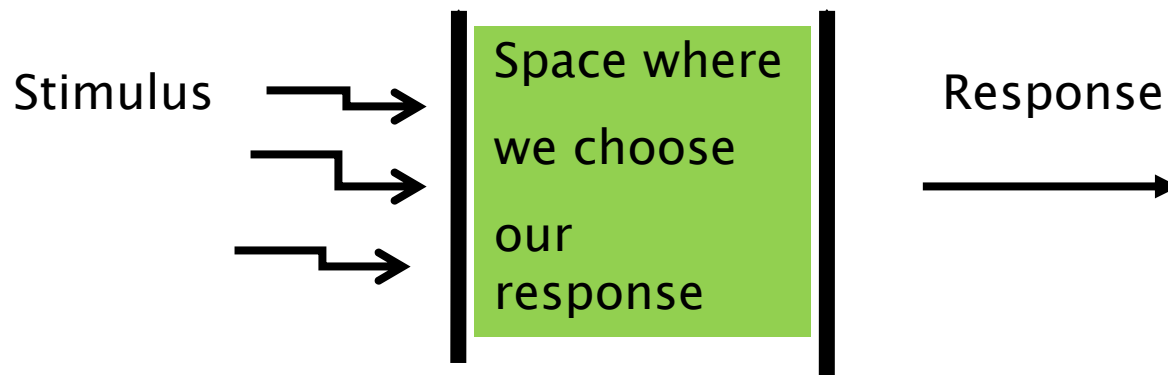
William Duffy RN MJ CNOR FAAN  
Email: [williamduffy6967@comcast.net](mailto:williamduffy6967@comcast.net)

# The Battle to Keep Patients Safe

- As colleagues, we are united in a epic battle to maintain the health of our fellow man
  - Same goals, techniques, strengths, & weaknesses
  - Our patients are equally vulnerable
- Disease never sleeps, never takes a vacation, and does not care about the person it is attacking
- Sometimes its attacks on people are sudden but many times it slowly erodes a person's health
- We are defense against this terrible enemy.
- We must use all our talents to protect our patients

# The Critical Factor in Protecting Patients is Within All of US

- Between every stimulus and every response is a **space**



This space is where we control our destiny.  
Its where we determine our reactions



“Who cares, its done, end of story, will probably be fine.”

British Petroleum Executive

# We are the Greatest Risk to Patient Safety

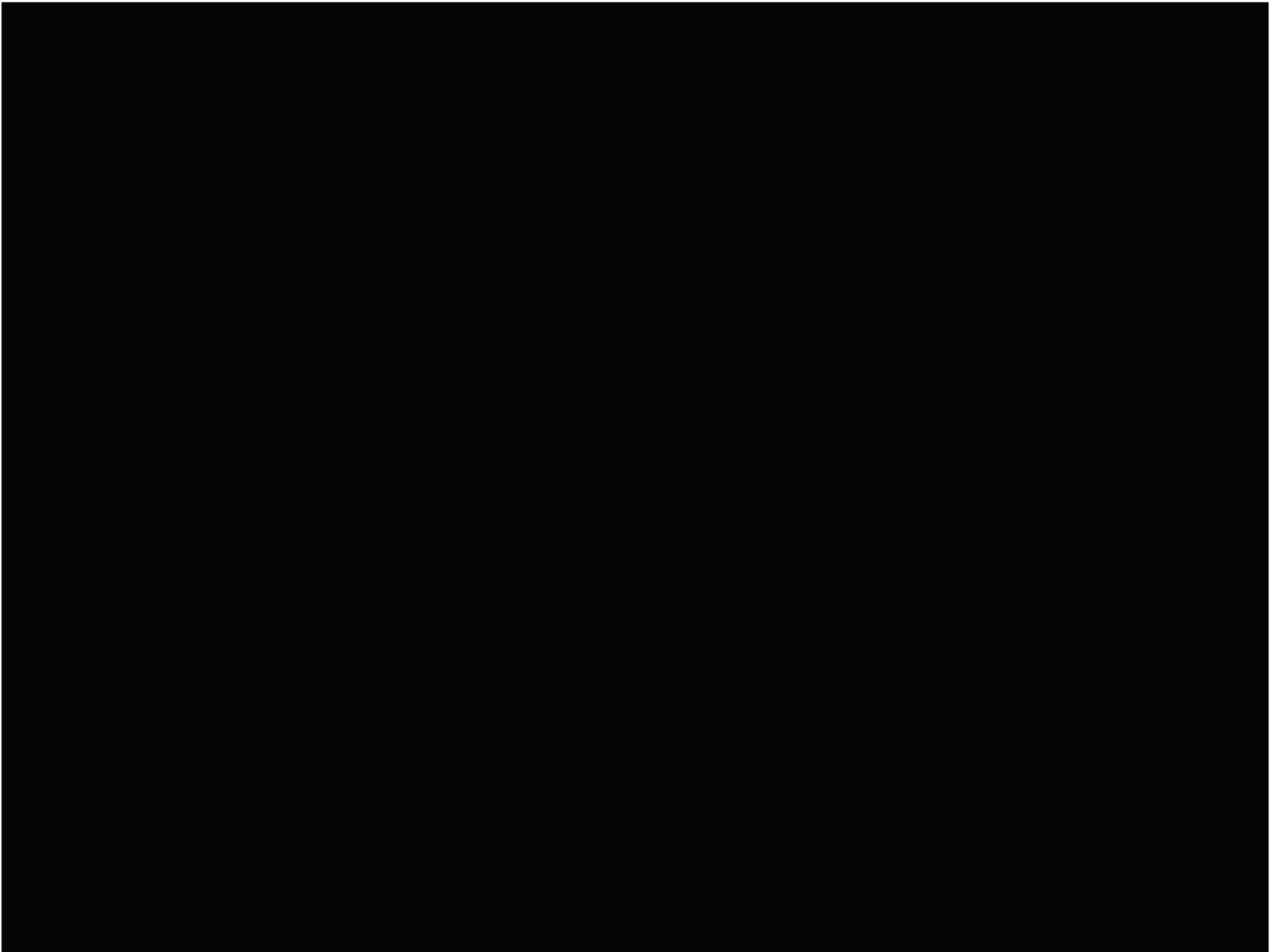
- Humans normalize danger
  - Risky acts become routine after repeated performance
  - We develop mindset that we mastered the process (become experts)
  - When this happens our minds start to focus on other things and we become distracted
- Technology and good policies can help us stay focused but nothing can replace a human being's capacity to react to stimuli
- Patient safety rests with us being constantly on guard and appropriately reacting to stimuli.

# Normalization of Danger

- The fact is every single time we interact with a patient we have the ability to do great good or great harm.
- Very few errors occur because clinician did not know what to do
- Most errors occur because clinicians were distracted
  - Thinking of other tasks
  - Trying to do two things at once
- Somehow we have to remember that we have the power to change lives
- When we respect that power we have a better chance to be aware of the danger that is present which should help us stay focused

# Helpful Behaviors To Protect Patients

- Establish Just Culture Environment
- Don't let technology distract you from your patient
- Address verbal abuse as a patient safety issue
- Believe in your power to do anything
- Be perfect in your practice



# Create a Just Culture to Prevent Errors

- When employees feel threatened
  - Personal accountability diminishes
  - Employees will act to protect themselves which may lead to them hiding errors
- Need to establish “Just Culture” environment where we have proper response to errors
- Three types of errors and proper responses

| <u>Error</u>       | <u>Response</u> |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| • Reckless         | Punish          |
| • Human error      | Console         |
| • At risk behavior | Coach           |

# Reckless Errors

- Reckless behavior is the choice to consciously disregard a substantial and unjustified risk
  - Choosing to drive knowing you are intoxicated
  - Choosing to double the dosage of a high risk medication without an order
- “At Risk” behavior should be punished because the person is knowingly placing others at risk
- These types of errors are usually a small percentage of the total errors

# At Risk Behavior

- Is the behavior that results from our analysis between risk and reward
  - We all speed
    - Risk is getting into accident
    - Reward getting to where we are going sooner
    - We determine a “safe” speed above limit
  - Hand Washing data: less than 100% compliance
    - We know hand washing prevents infections
    - But health care workers may be pressed for time
- This behavior should be coached
  - Non-punitive constructive dialogue

# Human Error

- Human Error is the result of inadvertent or unintentional response to stimuli.
  - It is part of the human condition
  - A nurse miscalculates a decimal point on a medication order and gives more than ordered
  - You miss your stop on the train because you are distracted talking on the cell phone
- This behavior should be consoled
  - No intent to harm
  - Good nurse making a mistake (all humans do)



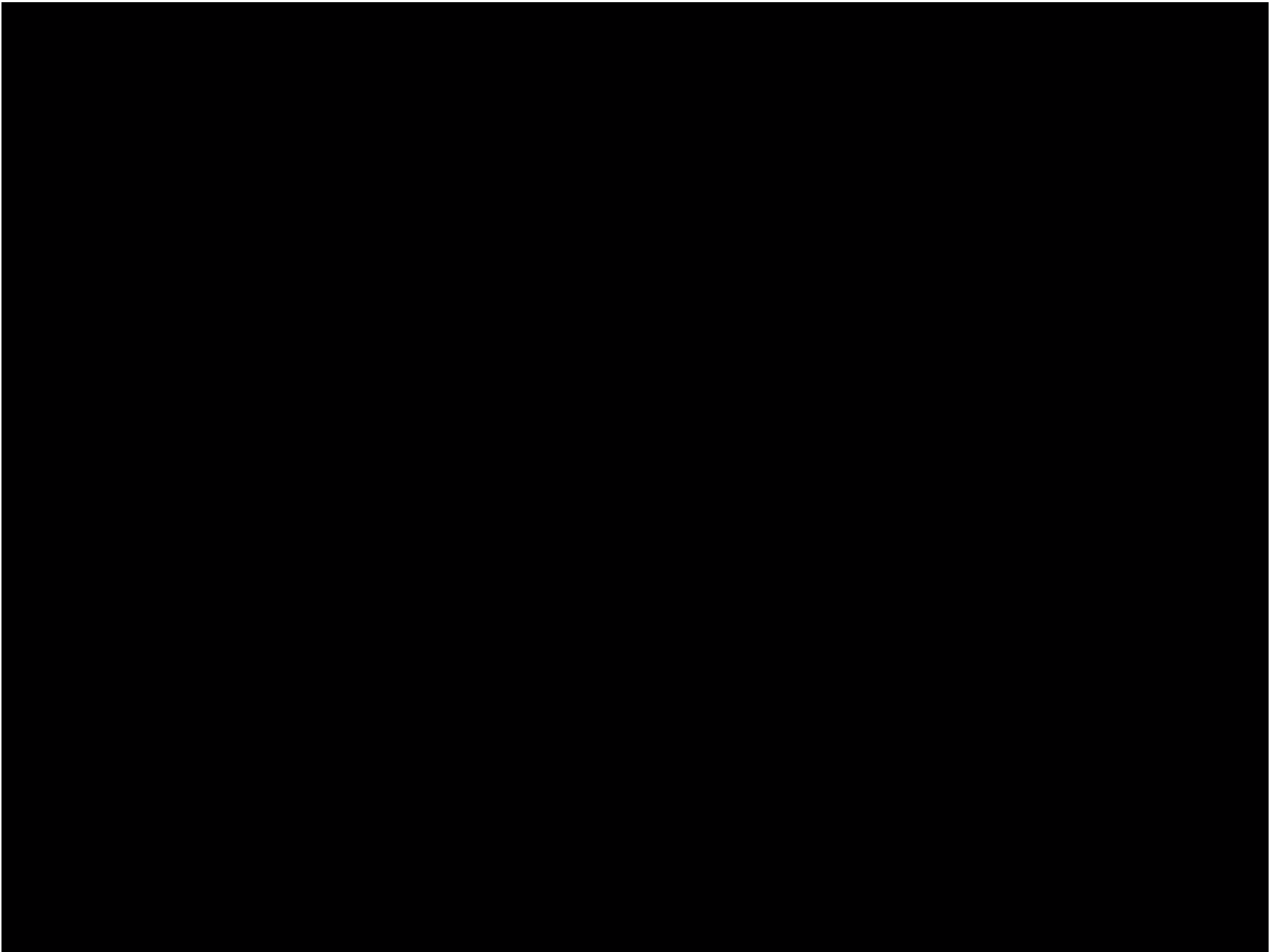
Moyea Software

# Technology Distractions

- Three examples why Technology can distract nurses
  - It can become the “electric patient” if we are not careful because it:
    - Is primary source for patient data
    - is used to treat patient’s condition
    - Needs to be cared for and maintained to function
    - It is often a barrier between us and patient
  - It is used to document nurse productivity
    - Demonstrates competency of nurse
    - Demonstrates productivity of nurse
    - So nurses pay attention to technology
  - Its use is increasingly becoming a way of life

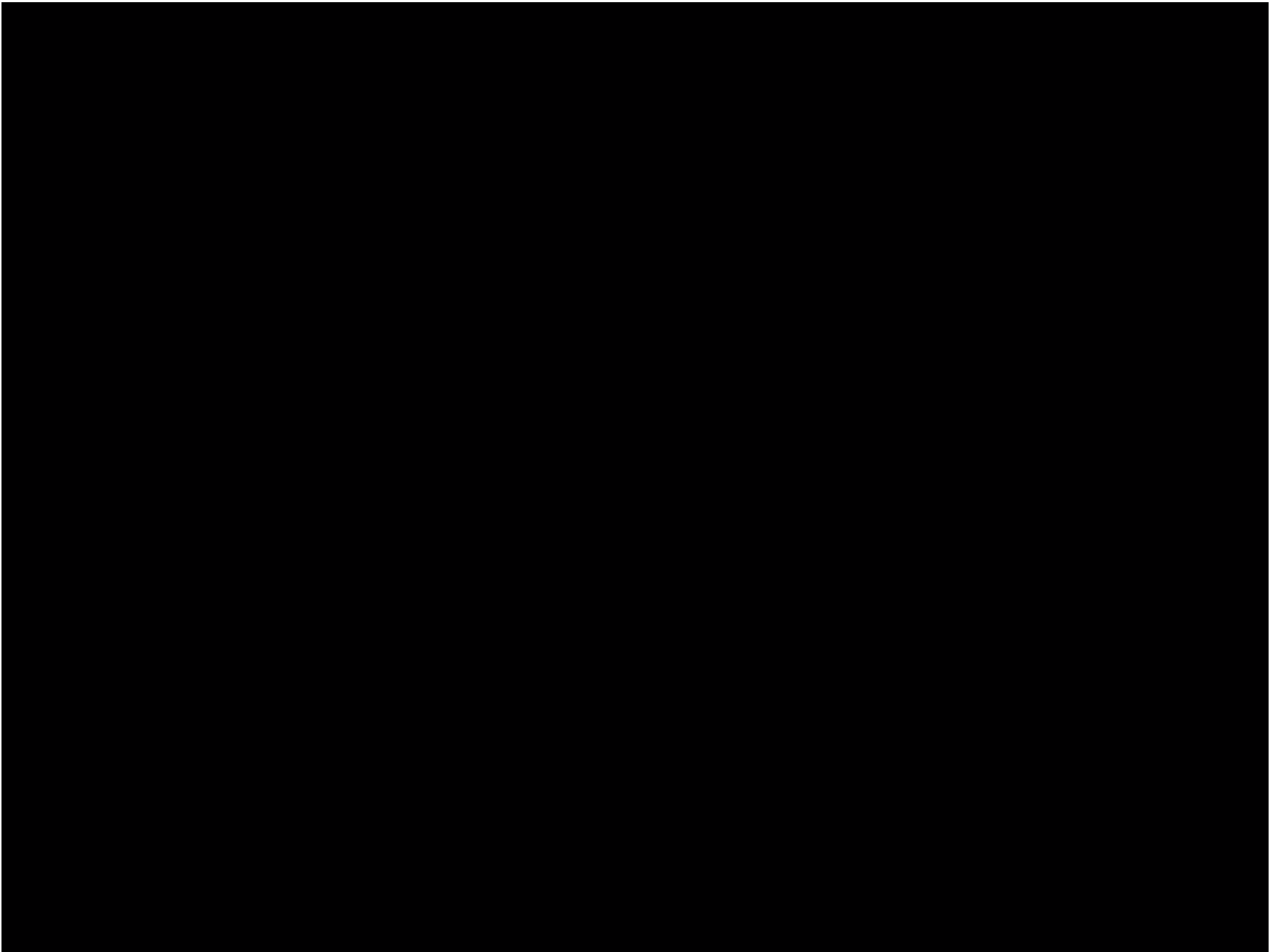
# Nursing Slow to Study Technology's Impact on our Practice

- Technology impacts on nurse patient relationship
  - Multiple physician studies documenting impact by electronic medical record (EMR)
  - Only one nursing study looked at impact
    - Using EMR nurses stayed in room longer but looked at and talked to patient 50% less (compared to paper charting)
    - Patient satisfaction scores lower in those instances.
- When acquiring new technology
  - Teach staff how to use
  - But also how to balance technology needs and patient needs



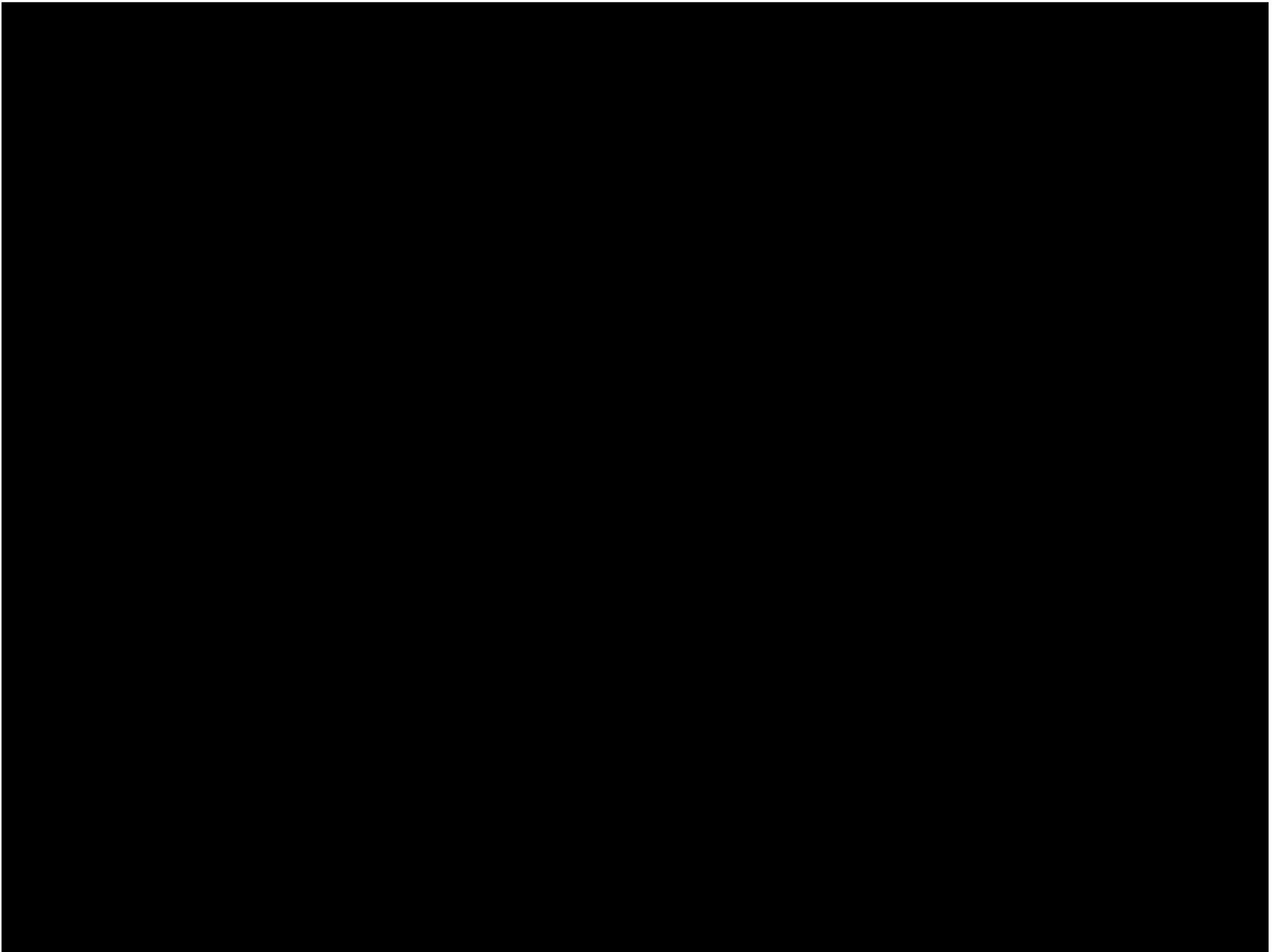
# Do not Tolerate Abuse

- Verbal Abuse creates potential for errors
  - Abused employees less likely to speak up
  - When abuse happens everyone focuses on abuse and not on their duties
- Actions to take
  - Don't let abuse occur in front of patient
  - Support colleague being verbally abused
    - Do not let them be alone – stand with them
    - This changes dynamics of group
  - Talk with abuser when adrenalin levels are normal



# Believe in Your Abilities

- Each of us have talents that help us succeed
  - Some people gain satisfaction and power by telling others what they can or can not achieve
  - Avoid these people – they will stop your success
- Believe in your abilities
  - You can achieve anything you put your mind too
  - It is Ok to get help on your journey to success
  - It will give your strength to address safety concerns
  - It will give hope to others and help them succeed



# Be Perfect in Your Practice

- Each of us have only some many years left to care for patients
- That is our opportunity to make a difference
- Being perfect is not about being error free
- Being perfect is being able to look patient and physicians in the eye and say you did your best
- Only you will know when:
  - you take a short cut
  - or choose at risk behaviors
  - when you are too tired from staying up late

## THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim,  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;  
Though as for that the passing there  
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden black.  
Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,  
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I-  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference. Robert Frost

# The Road You Have Taken

- Patients come to hospital believing you are competent but hope you will care about them
  - Hospitals are very dehumanizing
  - We have the ability to make people feel whole during this time
  - When patients feel whole they recover quicker
- We have the great honor of being able to change the future of our patients' lives
- Touch their lives positively by giving them the best chance to win the battle against disease.
- You have taken the road less traveled and it has made all the difference