



## *Interview of the Month*

# THE NURSE NOTE

*Interview with Janelle King  
Founder and CEO of thenursenote.com*

INTERVIEWED BY ZELIE SAVINIEN, SHECANHECAN

1) In a podcast, you explain how you became a vagina nurse. Could you tell us more about your work and how it differs from being a gynecologist?

As a registered nurse, I aim to protect, promote, and optimize my patients' health and wellbeing. During my career, I've provided care to young adults, many of whom lacked body literacy and were not aware of how their behaviors may contribute to sub-optimal reproductive and sexual health. So, a large extent of my work was to teach individuals about sex, contraceptive choices, STI, body literacy and to encourage risk reduction.

When I would talk to my friends and family about my work activities, they wanted to know more and took the opportunity to ask questions about their own reproductive and sexual health. Because I would get questions so often, I figured should share these conversations on a larger platform. That's when I started my social media pages and my blog thenursenote.com. Here I provide information about reproductive and sexual in an easy-to-understand manner. So that's really where the vagina nurse comes from.

Gynecologists, on the other hand, are doctors with specialized training to diagnose and treat patients with female reproductive organs. Although gynecologists also provide patient education, they spend much more of their time diagnosing, treating, and managing related conditions.



**2) As a vagina nurse, have you witnessed gynecological violence towards women? Have you been able to assist these women?**

Unfortunately, yes. One incident that sticks with me was when a young patient was diagnosed with an STI. We later found out that a family friend was sexually abusing the patient. Of course, as a clinical team (physician, nurse, medical assistant), we reported the incident to the proper authorities, ensured the patient was treated and provided the patient and family with the resources they needed.

**3) For many individuals, it's still difficult to talk about periods. What do you think we can do to help break the taboo and encourage young and less young people to talk more openly about periods?**

We need to continue talking about periods and menstrual health frankly on all platforms. The more we talk about them and, the more normalized these topics become and as a result, we help to erase the associated stigma. As parents and caregivers, we should aim be having these conversations often and early with our young people, so they are more comfortable with their bodies and are able to talk about related issues with their friends, peers, and others.

Period inequity goes further than poverty, even for folks who have better access to products ie. less financial barriers we still don't see them being provided. Think about it, you go to a bathroom in a restaurant, cinema even in a fancy 5\* hotel and there are many products provided for you; toilet roll, soap, hand cream, [in hotels] a sewing kit, shampoo/conditioner, shoe polish, bottled water, coffee pods... but never period products!

There is also still the issue of lack of knowledge and understanding about periods. In schools, students get some education around a period, but usually only about the days when your period comes as opposed to learning about the whole menstrual cycle, the hormonal changes, how to listen and take care of your body and the types of products you use and what's in them eg. organic vs non organic.

**4) How can we better educate young people about consent?**

We need to talk about it. There is room for improvement when it comes to educating young adults about consent and healthy relationships.

It's essential that young people know what they like and do not like when it physical intimacy and teach them how to communicate their feelings with their partners.

It is also pertinent that they know how to negotiate consent and let them know that they have the right to change their minds at any time.



*I've provided care to young adults, many of whom lacked body literacy and were not aware of how their behaviors may contribute to sub-optimal reproductive and sexual health.*



**5) On a final note, what are your tips for a healthier sexual life and better periods?**

This is a great question. First, you must get to know your body. You should recognize what is "normal" for your body. Know what your menstrual flow looks like (how long, how much flow, color, etc.). You should also be aware of your vaginal discharge (consistency, color, amount, etc.). Knowing your "normal" helps you to recognize when issues arise.

It's also essential to get to know yourself as a sexual being. Be aware of your likes and dislikes in the bedroom so you can better communicate that with your partner. Finally, have a trusted healthcare professional. Someone you can share all your healthcare concerns with without the fear of judgment or ridicule. Having a trusted provider also ensures you get proper diagnosis and treatment when issues arise.

*About Janelle King*

*Janelle holds a Master's Degree in Public Health and a Bachelor's Degree in Nursing. Her clinical nursing background includes HIV outreach, adolescent medicine, college health, and cardiovascular health. Amongst others, Janelle specializes in the following healthcare niches: women's reproductive health, maternal and child health and sexually transmitted infection including HIV. She is the founder and CEO of [thenursenote.com](http://thenursenote.com)*



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