

Poem

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THE FOB WATCH WITNESS

Kerry Davis

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## THE FOB WATCH WITNESS

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We bought you this, my parents said, on Graduation Day  
A silver fob to wear with pride on your first nursing day  
Though upside down, suspended there, it meant my wrists stayed clean  
But little did I realise what this watch would come to mean  
My white nurse smock, my watch adorned – it held symbolic power  
For it would witness from its chain, each second, minute, hour  
I mastered 24-hour clock and wore it night and day  
Over my heart, my watch it sat, a silent part to play  
The travel time, handover done – Night staff must get away  
The start of shift, a quick walk round, then time to plan my day  
The patient obs – the breaths per minute  
24-hour urine – not very much in it?  
Medications took some time – an antibiotic in the line  
A slow push over 5 minutes is fine  
And count the drips through the IV line  
GTN puffs, five minutes apart  
Counting the pulse – listen over the heart  
Chest compressions – 100 per minute  
Early morning breakfast – not sure what's in it?  
The Apgar scores at one and five  
The length of down-time – can she survive?  
12-hour shifts, split shifts or double  
Visiting hours – don't want any trouble  
Her dog smuggled up the service stairs  
Works well to allay the patient's fears  
Beyond nursing actions, my fob witnessed more  
The breaking of bad news and moments so raw  
The longest goodbyes and the most fleeting too  
Do you have a minute, nurse? – of course I do  
My watch sits alone in my bottom drawer, no longer keeping time  
But testament to the precious days, encompassed in this rhyme.

## HISTORY OF THE FOB WATCH

A fob watch was occasionally given as a gift associated with a rite-of-passage from parents to young nurses. Clipped onto the uniform, it was worn upside down so that the time could be read without handling the timepiece or touching potentially infectious surfaces.



Figure 1. The fob watch.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

With approval from the Editor of *Scope (Health & Wellbeing)*, 'The fob watch witness' was shared with representatives celebrating 'Fifty years of nursing education in the tertiary sector 1973-2023' in the Great Hall of Parliament on 28 June, 2023. The celebration was a joint initiative between The Nursing Council of New Zealand (NCNZ), the Council of Deans Australia and New Zealand, and New Zealand Nursing Education in the Tertiary Sector (NETS). 'The fob watch witness' poem was included in the welcome pack and was read aloud to the audience of several hundred nursing representatives. Several members of the audience commented after the reading that the poem had touched them, reconnecting them with their own fob watch and their early nursing career.

**Kerry Davis** is a Principal Lecturer in the School of Nursing at Otago Polytechnic Te Pūkenga. Transitioning from over 30 years of practice in acute care and clinical education, Kerry now coordinates the 'Senior person's health' and 'Evidence based nursing' courses, for over 100 ākongā each year, in the Bachelor of Nursing programme. Kerry believes that the art of nursing can be expressed through poetry and narrative, to help ākongā connect with and make sense of their feelings, professional practice and episodes of care.

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