Reading Selection 4

Nursing is not simply a collection of specific skills, and the nurse is not simply a person trained to perform specific tasks. Nursing is a profession. No one factor absolutely differentiates a job from a profession, but the difference is important in terms of how nurses practice. When we say a person acts “professionally,” for example, we imply that the person is conscientious in actions, knowledgeable in the subject, and responsible for self and others. Professions possess the following primary characteristics:

• A profession requires an extended education of its members, as well as a basic liberal foundation.

• A profession has a theoretical body of knowledge leading to defined skills, abilities, and norms.

• Members of a profession have autonomy in decision making and practice.

• The profession as a whole has a code of ethics for practice.

The practice of professional nursing and nursing knowledge has been developed over time through development of nursing theories and research. Theoretical models serve as frameworks for nursing curricula and clinical practice. Nursing research increases the scientific basis of nursing practice through systematic inquiry into health care problems and issues.