As editor Lee Gutkind points out in the introduction to *I Wasn’t Strong Like This When I Started Out*, “there are over 2.7 million working RNs in the United States (not to mention our many LPNs and LVNs), compared to about 690,000 physicians and surgeons. There are more nurses in the United States than engineers … or accountants and auditors … And, yet, many of us take the work these men and women do for granted.”

This collection of true narratives captures the dynamism and diversity of nurses, who provide the vital first line of patient care. Here, nurses remember their first “sticks,” first births, and first deaths, and reflect on what gets them through long demanding shifts, and keeps them in the profession. The stories reveal many voices from nurses at different stages of their careers: One nurse-in-training longs to be trusted with more “important” procedures, while another questions her ability to care for nursing home residents. An efficient young emergency room nurse finds his life and career irrevocably changed by a car accident. A nurse practitioner wonders whether she has violated professional boundaries in her car for a homeless man with AIDS, and a home care case manager is the sole attendee at a funeral for one of her patients. What connects these stories is the passion and strength of the writers, who struggle against burnout and bureaucracy to serve their patients with skill, empathy, and strength.

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Lee Gutkind has explored the world of medicine, technology and science through writing for more than 25 years. He is the author of 15 books, including *Many Sleepless Nights: The World of Organ Transplantation*, and the editor of five anthologies about health and medicine, including *At the End of Life: True Stories About How We Die*.

**In Fact Books** is a new imprint founded and edited by Lee Gutkind, editor and founder of *Creative Nonfiction*. In Fact Books titles help create an understanding of our world through thoughtful, engaging narratives on a wide variety of topics and real-life experiences. All titles are distributed by Publishers Group West. For more information, please visit [www.infactbooks.com](http://www.infactbooks.com).

For interview requests and other media related questions, please contact: Hattie Fletcher at fletcher@creativenonfiction.org or (412) 688-0304.
Early Praise

A startling collection of stories from the bedside.
—Paul Austin, author of Something for the Pain: Compassion and Burnout in the ER

The elephant in the living room of healthcare is that providers care deeply about and are affected by the people they tend. The best ones are, anyway. In I Wasn’t Strong Like this When I Started Out, nurses recall pivotal moments with patients and families that changed them from onlookers to active participants in the art of healing. This excellent collection chronicles those experiences in funny, eloquent, and often piercing essays. It should be required reading for anyone beginning a career in healthcare—nurses and physicians alike.

—Margaret Overton, MD, author of Good in a Crisis

Within these pages, we learn what it is like to protect a dying patient from a futile procedure, to smooth a newborn’s wrinkled brow for a postmortem photo, to work in a foreign country where medical equipment is improvised from household supplies. These stories teach us the essence of nursing—that even when cure is not possible, comfort is.

—Catherine Musemeche, MD, surgeon and author

The nurses in this collection bear witness to life, death, suffering, joy—the many aspects of humanity itself. These are no saccharine tales of self-sacrifice, of stereotypical Florence Nightingale-like ladies with lamps. The men and women in this collection tell stories that cut to the bone, exposing their profession’s deep emotional, intellectual, physical, and spiritual trials. Yet, in those struggles emerges great beauty and human connection. This collection exposes not only the strong, beating heart of nursing, but its brain, muscle, sinew and nerve endings—alive, pulsating, raw, real.

—Sayantani DasGupta, MD, MPH, co-editor, Stories of Illness and Healing: Women Write Their Bodies

An honest and compassionate collection of life in nursing. In voices of novices and veterans in the field, it’s an intimate portrayal of how growth is a two way street. Whether listening, touching or just remembering, when you do anything you can to help your patient, your life is also shaped in the process. They are not just lessons, but gifts, that transcend any hierarchy in medicine.

—Gulchin A. Ergun, MD, Clinical Service Chief, Gastroenterology

Like most physicians, I have a long list of nurses who have mentored me, influencing my practice of medicine in the way they live their lives and care for their patients. This book is a testament to those wise nursing colleagues—and to the paths that have brought them their wisdom.

—Marion Bishop, MD, PhD, Emergency Medicine physician and essayist

With tenderness, honesty, humor, and some anger, the authors of these engaging essays draw us into the complex beauty of nursing from an exhilarating variety of perspectives. This welcome, eye-opening collection should be required reading for every medical student and apprentice hospital administrator.

—Margaret Mohrmann, MD, PhD, University of Virginia

In these powerful narratives, twenty-one nurses unfold what it means to practice their profession: what they are thinking and feeling when they care for patients and when they go home, how they came to choose this difficult and rewarding career, their satisfactions and frustrations, their triumphs and traumas. Moreover: they write exceedingly well.

—Charles Bardes, MD, author of Pale Faces: The Masks of Anemia and Essential Skills in Clinical Medicine

Poignant recollections from often ignored voices in medicine. These wonderful stories resound with truth.

—Sandeep Jauhar, author of Intern: A Doctor’s Initiation