



# ASPAN

American Society of PeriAnesthesia Nurses

## Message from the President

### Be the Voice for Our Patients, Our Practice and Our Profession

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**ASPAN President 2007-2008**

Advocacy encompasses the involvement of one person or a group of people actively speaking out. This participation may include the defense or support of a cause, deliberate action, or seeking to bring about change. Advocacy is not a new concept in nursing. Nurses have been advocating for patients and the practice of nursing since the days of Florence Nightingale. Her commitment to patient care and subsequent involvement in patient, hospital, and social issues helped to reform and revolutionize healthcare.

As perianesthesia nurses, we are well informed and well educated in our practice, thus allowing us to engage in patient advocacy every day. But, as Florence Nightingale demonstrated, being an advocate requires not only the knowledge and understanding of a topic or issue; advocacy includes giving voice to and speaking out about that issue.

#### **Promoting the Vision**

As each new ASPAN president begins his or her term in office, we are given the opportunity to incorporate initiatives into the ASPAN Strategic Plan. These initiatives professionally strengthen and advance our organization's position as a powerful advocate for perianesthesia nursing.

ASPAN is recognized as the premier organization for perianesthesia expertise and leadership in clinical practice, education and research. The same skills that comprise perianesthesia nursing expertise also serve us in the role of advocate. One of ASPAN's goals is to be recognized worldwide as the "voice" for perianesthesia nursing. Our advocacy goals center not only on patients entrusted to our care, but on the nursing profession and the general provision of healthcare. As an organization, we must proactively embrace opportunities to plan and create a vision. Over the next year, I will be asking each of you to join me and be the voice and advocate for our patients, practice and profession.

#### **Expert Dialogue Needed**

In the complex world of healthcare, nurses work to save lives and improve patient care. Most of us have encountered concerns about patient safety, staffing, environmental and workplace issues, the recruitment and retention of new nurses, and the aging nursing workforce. Nurses' experience and knowledge make a profound difference in our role as trusted patient care experts.

We need to recognize that much of what nurses experience and carry out on a daily basis is directly influenced by policy, laws, and regulations. Policymakers and elected officials make decisions that have a direct impact on patients, nursing practice, and healthcare. Unfortunately, most legislators have limited substantive knowledge and understanding about healthcare issues or the people affected. If nurses neglect to organize and speak out on important issues surrounding professional practice, then others who are less knowledgeable will direct the practice.

As professional experts we have a responsibility to address issues that affect our patients' well-being, our specialty practice, and the healthcare system in general. Giving a voice to perianesthesia nursing requires strategic thoughts and actions focused on building relationships. To truly "Be the Voice" for perianesthesia nursing, ASPAN members must become proactive advocates.

## **Power of One**

You may be asking, "How can I be the voice for perianesthesia nursing? Can one person actually make a difference?" Absolutely! Who can articulate nursing practice and provide relevant, accurate perspectives on nursing better than a nurse? Every nurse can identify barriers to best practices and can, in turn, offer suggestions and solutions for improvements. It is time to raise your voice regarding practice challenges and concerns.

Each of you is a remarkable patient activist who makes a profound difference in the lives of others. I would venture that most of us have little difficulty speaking up to a surgeon or anesthesiologist when we are concerned about a patient's care or condition. Our voices cannot stop at the bedside. We must advocate for and be actively involved in issues that affect our workplace environment, such as safety and staffing issues that negatively impact the care we deliver. The practice environment should be one that is respectful of the nursing profession; therefore, we have got to speak out to ensure that nursing practice is supported and valued.

Your voice is powerful and it can be heard when steps toward increased involvement are taken. Make opportunities to gain an understanding of the legislative and political process. Know the "political players" and research how they are voting on issues surrounding nursing and healthcare. Send letters to your elected representatives, visit with key staff members, volunteer on a campaign, give testimony before a legislative committee, and most importantly, exercise your right to vote.

## **Call to Action**

You, the grassroots member, are ASPAN. Your ongoing professional passion and commitment has created and shaped perianesthesia practice as we know it today. Your organization offers an opportunity to become involved with the Governmental Affairs Committee on a component or national level. ASPAN also provides a scholarship to attend the exciting Nurse in Washington Internship (NIWI) Program every year.

Nurses must transform thoughts and ideas from silence into voice and action to truly influence the future. Embrace your expertise and depth of knowledge. Demonstrate it. Give voice to it. You are in a position to impact vital healthcare transformation. Our voices and actions, individually and collectively, will move ASPAN forward in unity and advocacy.

I appreciate the opportunity you have given me to lead ASPAN, and I am honored to serve as your president. In closing, I would like to share a quote from Florence Nightingale:

*"...I think one's feelings waste themselves in words,  
they ought all to be distilled into actions and actions which bring results."*

As nursing professionals we are charged to take up the challenges that affect perianesthesia nursing and healthcare. We can embrace the opportunities before us while being visionary leaders in the movement toward improving and advancing our profession. I call you to action and ask that you partner with me in the year ahead to "Be the Voice" for our Patients, our Practice and our Profession.