



ASPAN

American Society of PeriAnesthesia Nurses

Message from the President

Renew Perianesthesia Passion: Excellence in Action, Passion in Action

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Coleen “Connie” Myers recently passed away (see her obituary in the September/October issue of *Breathline*). Connie, from Kansas, was one of ASPAN’s esteemed founding members. In 1979, she and eighteen other visionary nurses, all leaders of their local “recovery nurses associations” from across the United States, came together in Chicago to bring their passion for ‘recovery nursing’ into action.¹ These women were determined to have an organization that represented our specialty. In a hotel lobby in Chicago during an annual American Society of Anesthesiologists conference, the first rough draft of organizational bylaws was written.

In the ensuing days, Connie and the other founding directors were already busy organizing resources with other recovery nurses to provide education and networking for interested members. The first official meeting of ASPAN took place in Lake Buena Vista, Florida. ASPAN was born to unite all state organizations into one. As a result of putting passion into action, Connie and her colleagues realized their dream when ASPAN was established in 1981.

During the 2016 National Conference in Philadelphia, ASPAN will be celebrating 35 years of dedicated, passionate work. This is an achievement made possible by the willingness to answer a call for action, a feat made possible by the countless volunteers, leaders, members and supportive national office staff.

Passion Through the Ages

ASPAN’s history is a story of passion. ASPAN was born in the 1980s as a result of passionate nurses, like its founding members, who made sure that perianesthesia nurses had a voice. ‘Recovery room’ nurses evolved, the practice evolved, and soon we embraced the scope and breadth of our work as perianesthesia nurses.

In the 1990s, ASPAN approached the future with a need to reorganize and provide for long-term planning and goal-setting in order to assure a solid future. During this time, ASPAN fell victim to a devastating and stunning embezzlement of its treasury, surviving only by the strength and passion of its leaders. ASPAN’s foundation, infrastructure and resources needed to be rebuilt. The passion of ASPAN members and leaders at that time brought the organization through this troubling episode, and ASPAN began to grow again.

The 2000s showed an exponential growth in ASPAN. Volunteer members and leaders continued to carry passion into its education, research and clinical practice arms. ASPAN continued to build strategic relationships with other organizations and created vital liaison appointments. By the middle of the decade, the leadership courageously voted to buy its current national office, located in Cherry Hill, New Jersey.

Passion: Reform of Healthcare

Fast forward to 2015. In 2010, The Institute of Medicine (IOM) published “The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health.”² This document inspires us to not only remain passionate for perianesthesia nursing, but for the profession as a whole. It also challenges nurses to become active participants in the changing healthcare system. The recent passage of the Affordable Care Act³ is but one piece of

legislation that was created to reform the healthcare system to provide greater access to healthcare with enhanced affordability for consumers.

Questions remain. Has the IOM initiative made an impact on our healthcare processes? How? Workshops to evaluate the impact of this initiative were conducted in Washington D.C. recently. A summary report of those workshops, provided by two ASPAN members who attended, reveals consensus that there is still a lot of work to be done (see their report in the September/October issue of *Breathline*). The IOM evaluation validates the notion that **individual** nurses are responsible for their own practice. In addition, **specialty organizations**, like ASPAN, must collaborate with partner organizations to meet the challenges ahead.

The Future of Nursing

The IOM report provisions and recommendations, as well as the Affordable Care Act, are moving slowly, but surely, to remove barriers to the scope of practice. At least 21 states and the District of Columbia have legislation and/or regulations allowing advanced practice nurses to practice independently. The scope of independent practice was a hot topic during the March 2015 Nurse in Washington Internship (NIWI).⁴ Attendees recognized the value of nurse practitioners in helping to meet the needs of veterans in the Veteran's Administration healthcare system.

Barriers to education abound. Funding is constantly in jeopardy. Although reports indicate that there is a decline in Associates Degree Nursing (ADN) programs, there are not enough Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) prepared nurses to join or replace the current nursing workforce. Nationally, there will be a shortfall in the number of nurses by 2025 based on increased demand, despite the fact that many states will have increased supplies of nurses.⁵ It has been concluded that nurse residency programs are a great addition to the acute settings, but there are not enough to meet our needs.

What We Need to Do Now

Commitment, love and passion for our profession will help us through this decade. It is imperative as individuals and as an organization that we continue to support the recommendations that the IOM has initiated. Nurses need to unite and become one voice for our future and to make the changes a reality. Our founding members had no idea how far their vision and passion would take us. Their passion has lit the way for us; our passion will do the same for those who will follow in our footsteps.

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