



ASPAN

American Society of PeriAnesthesia Nurses

Message from the President

Nurses at the Table

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How many opportunities do you miss to bring a nursing perspective 'to the table'? I know your lives are busy, with varied and complex commitments. You are challenged at work to increase productivity with fewer resources. Family lives and personal time must be balanced with professional commitments. You may think that you leave your professional self at work and that your contribution to nursing is only accomplished by your defined work role. I think the voice of nursing is more powerful than the confines of the workplace. As a nurse, you have the potential to make a difference.

The public respects nurses. They know we are professionals who ensure continuity in their care and provide expertise and presence at all hours. Haven't you been referred to as "my sister, the nurse," "my neighbor, the nurse," and fielded numerous phone calls for advice or referrals? Your opinion is valued. Your knowledge of the health care field and how the system works is respected. I encourage you to raise your voice not only as a citizen but also as a nurse, and as a caregiver, to share your perspective. Take advantage of the opportunities that already exist in your busy lives to speak about nursing and patient care issues. When leaving the workplace, do not separate from your professional nursing persona.

You may have the opportunity to participate on the school board in your community or on a legislative task force for the mayor or a city councilman. You have expertise; share it. If you don't, seek it. You may be the only nurse at the table. There are countless opportunities for you to be an informed player in some very complex processes. Share your knowledge, gain visibility and get involved. Many healthcare decisions are made without the input and expertise of nurses because we are not there, or are not interested, or persuasive enough to get to the table. There are over two million professional nurses in the country; one in four registered voters is a nurse. What a formidable voice! Imagine the possibilities if nurses were involved and represented.

I am reminded of a story about a nurse from my state. In December 1993, Carolyn McCarthy's husband and son were the victims of a gunman who went on a shooting spree on the Long Island Railroad. Her son was permanently disabled and her husband died as a result of this shooting. In 1994, she successfully lobbied Congress to pass a ban on assault weapons. Two years later, her Congressman voted to repeal the law. At this point Carolyn decided to run for office because she did not feel she was being represented. It was a tough campaign, but Carolyn beat the incumbent by 16 percentage points. Carolyn McCarthy is at the table, as are two other nurses who serve in Congress.

In June, I attended the American Nurses Association (ANA) Convention in San Diego. Networking with other nursing leaders and sharing my pride in perianesthesia nursing were invaluable. I participated in forums with presidents from other nursing organizations. I went to meetings on credentialing and ANCC guidelines. I felt privileged to be at the table with many well-known leaders in nursing where my opinion was valued.

Dr. Beverly Malone, President of the ANA, was reelected for a second two-year term in that leadership role. Her most recent message is that nurses must be present and active "at the table." She says that the power of nursing has yet to be unleashed. She speaks with clarity and vision that energizes her audience. I enjoy listening to her speak at every opportunity; her stories are warm and full of passion for nurses and

nursing. She talks about special nurses you love to be with; the positive, impressive mentors who make the world a better place. I believe many of you are those special nurses.

I have found that the part of me that is a nurse is not separate from my friendships, travels, and family relationships. I am pleased to say that I am a nurse, and proud and in awe to say that I am the President of ASPAN. In this role I speak on clinical topics, nursing issues and patient care. My travels have enabled me to enlarge my network of relationships. I find that I am eager to discuss health care issues, particularly patient advocacy, with individuals in varied situations.

I encourage you to be heard as a nurse. Get to the table, and share your expertise and perspective. Develop relationships within your workplace with other nursing units and other departments and disciplines. Participate in multidisciplinary committees, particularly policy making groups and Pharmacy and Therapeutics. Collaborate with other nursing organizations within your community. Take one step further and liaison with the anesthesia societies in your component area. Share your informed opinions with the editor of your local newspapers; talk about the real concerns for patient care. Participate in focus groups for our industry and pharmaceutical vendors; nursing input is valuable in product development and utilization. Talk to your friends with pride about the practice of nursing and the profession that you participate in with such intelligence and skill. Let's get to the table and stay there.