



ASPAN

American Society of PeriAnesthesia Nurses

Message from the President

Mentoring: A Roadmap to ASPAN's Future

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In my role as Nursing Administrator for Perianesthesia and Perioperative Services, I am frequently asked to orient new physicians coming into our facility. Long an advocate for nursing and perianesthesia practice, I enjoy this orientation task because it gives me an opportunity to discuss the importance of nurses as collaborative partners in the care of our patients within the perianesthesia arenas, and as a foundation for a communication expectation. I generally begin with an introduction comprising a short history of my practice in relation to the facility and its progressiveness related to healthcare services and support of nursing and physician practice. Recently, I mentioned to a younger colleague that I have been a nurse since the early 1970s; he looked at me most respectfully and then, in a tone of surprise, said, "Wow, how does it feel to be in practice longer than I have been alive?" I laughed and replied, "Ouch! I never really thought of it that way!" I left the discussion chuckling while remembering that I, too, had made similar remarks to my PACU colleagues when reminding them that I was only in the second grade when they were discussing former clinical practices.

Looking Back

My former perianesthesia colleagues would have been smiling to know that a young associate had given me a just reward with his remarks. More importantly, he unwittingly led me to think of my own professional nursing heroes - peers, clinical leaders and nurse managers, and district, chapter, component and national colleagues. They, in turn, educated, pushed and prodded me, influenced my clinical practice, and helped mentor me to think more critically, observe more vigilantly, assess and analyze my patients more carefully and thoughtfully and ultimately influence perianesthesia outcomes. This was a very satisfying experience for me, one I was determined to pass along in my own practice.

In a Model of Caring, Mentorship for Nursing, Wagner and Seymour describe mentoring in this way, "When guided by a caring framework of trust, commitment, compassion, and competence, mentoring is a caring action that builds healthy relationships and energizing environments."¹ I learned many a life and practice lesson from these nursing leaders, albeit by title or by the bedside – they were ALL leaders. They were generous with their time, and their insight and observations. They sought opportunities to inspire, believe in, cajole, quiz, support, encourage and challenge me. They willingly and openly shared their best experiences as well as their worst, so that I, too, could achieve each milestone in my career. While they clearly helped me to realize the value of professional development, I truly had not thought that much about the bonus lesson I learned from them: that is, the influence and the value that effective and caring mentoring has in succession planning. They were looking out not just for me, but also for the future of our practice.

Ensuring the Future

At many points throughout our careers, we help to orient nurses to our specialty practice, to our units, to our facility – and yes – to our districts and chapters, components, regions and national organizations. We need to challenge ourselves to move mentoring to the front burner so that we are always looking to prepare our colleagues to take the next steps. Every one of us, if asked, can share the names of nurses who most influenced our practice and our profession. I would challenge you to become that nurse so that others will mention YOU one day when they recount who inspired them!

Our ASPAN leaders - past, present and future – have made and will make decisions that they know will make a difference to our members. As ASPAN moves forward, our organization cannot maintain its constancy or its success without the impact of new and future leaders. Many of us, as nursing and organizational leaders and longtime ASPAN members, hold our roles and our dedication and commitment close to our hearts – as we should. I, too, realize this most poignantly in that I am coming into the tenth month of my role serving as ASPAN President. Because we hold these ideals so dear, we need to recognize the importance of moving forward and mentoring others who can pick up the torch and blaze on down the paths we started.

Be a Guiding Light

The value of our commitment and dedication is not lessened when we choose to mentor another to become a part of ASPAN and encourage him/her to sit on a committee, or take a leadership position as a coordinator, vice-coordinator or committee chair. This action becomes even more meaningful because in that same sharing, pushing, prodding, believing and supporting, our new members will then be taken forward as well. The value of their contributions is only enhanced by our investment in them: by making room for them at the table with those of us who have been there, done that. Our sacred obligation to pick up the cause of mentoring and fully supporting others as they, too, begin to create and contribute to ASPAN's future and our shared legacy as the true impact of knowing we have made and will continue to make a significant difference.

The ASPAN Vice President/President-Elect is charged with making committee, liaison, coordinator and work team assignments that will continue to uphold its mission and goals, and to operationalize our strategic plan and initiatives. These decisions, as made by so many before, assure that ASPAN remains a transformational and dynamic entity. Hader said that it is “incumbent upon us to continue to strive for excellence, mentor our reports to take our place, and continue to insist on a high level of care quality and patient services.”² We owe this goal of excellence to ourselves, our founding and past leaders, and our future leaders.

REFERENCES

1. Wagner AL, Seymour ME. A model of caring mentorship for nursing. *Journal for Nurses in Staff Development*, 23(5); 2007, 201-211.
2. Hader R. Nurse leaders: A closer look. *Nursing Management*, 41(1); 2010, 25-29.