



# ASPAN

American Society of PeriAnesthesia Nurses

## Message from the President

### The Essence of Nursing

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**ASPAN President 1997-1998**

Nurses make a difference in the healthcare of America. But what is it that we do as nurses to assist our patients to a state of wellness when they are sick? Florence Nightingale wrote that nursing is more than the administration of medicines and the application of politics. Miss Nightingale believed that nurses should provide a healthy environment so that the patient could heal themselves. Her visionary thinking helped to lay the foundation for what nursing is today.

A modern day description is given by Bonnie Wesorick, RN, in her book *The Closing and Opening of a Millennium: A Journey From Old to New Thinking*. Her book lists six Core Beliefs that describe the essence of health and nursing.<sup>2</sup> I have chosen to speak about the third Core Belief because I feel it is something that each individual nurse can do to help their profession during these changing times in healthcare. The third core belief is: Each person is accountable to explain his or her contribution to care.

Wesorick describes three types of professional services that a nurse provides. They are delegated services, interdependent services, and independent services.

A delegated service would be administering a medication ordered by the patient's physician. This is a task that families and people off the street can learn to do quickly.

But before the RN administers the medication he/she will assess for any allergies; know the action, onset, dosage and side effects of the medication. After the administration of the medication, he/she will continue to assess for any complications of the medication which would then be reported by the physician. The knowledge of the medication and the continued assessment after the administration of the medication is an interdependent service. An interdependent service is essentially the nursing process which is unique to professional nursing. It entails assessment through evaluation of the patient ideally to prevent but certainly to observe for any physiological complications of treatments or health situations. Another example of an interdependent service would be the vigilant respiratory assessment provided by the nurse after the administration of Morphine® in the postanesthesia patient.

Then there are the independent services that we provide to our patients to assure that they are treated as a whole being. These are the nursing actions that assist with the psychological responses patients experience as a result of hospitalization or illness. In our patient who received morphine for pain, the perianesthesia nurse would also offer reassurance that the medicine will make him/her comfortable. The nurse may say things like, "I believe you are in pain and I will keep giving you the medicine until you are comfortable." At the same time the nurse may move the patient into a more comfortable position, maybe a pillow under the knees or elevate the head of the stretcher. As the nurse waits for the onset of the morphine, he/she may try some relaxation and breathing techniques, imagery, or bring a family member to the bedside. These nursing actions would be independent services.

Have you ever said, "they have no idea what I do?" As professional nurses it is our responsibility to educate society on what we do. These three services; dependent, interdependent and independent are the contributions that registered nurses make to the care of patients.

In 1980 nineteen visionary nurses helped to establish perianesthesia nursing as a specialty with the founding of ASPAN. Through our Standard of Nursing practice, the Journal of Perianesthesia Nursing, research and educational programs, ASPAN assists perianesthesia nurses to provide a high quality of care for the perianesthesia patient. As our specialty has developed we have moved from being solely postanesthesia nurses to now including the ambulatory nurses, both hospital based and freestanding, and the preanesthesia nurses. Each of these three types of perianesthesia nurses make a unique contribution to the care of the patient. I am going to share some patient responses from surveys and cards that I have collected to illustrate my point. Some responses written by family members including a pediatric patient undergoing surgery "The pre-op visit with the nurse and the tour helped to calm my daughter's anxiety." Others stated "The expertise of the PACU nurse made me feel safe." "I was worried about caring for myself after the surgery, the nurses instructions helped put me at ease." "Thanks for the phone call, it came at just the right time." These statements exemplify some of the specifics of perianesthesia nursing. Add to this vigilant assessment and observation, critical care nursing skills, an understanding of surgical procedures and the action of anesthetic agents and you have the unique contributions perianesthesia nurses make to patient care.

I would like to close with a letter received by one of my colleagues from a patient that she cared for. I feel the letter describes how perianesthesia nurses make a difference.

*Dear Stephanie:*

*A friend of mine gave this poem to me a couple of years ago. I have it in a frame in my home. There is so much truth in it. Through breast reconstruction God has brought healing to my body. When I had surgery the first time he used you to help bring healing in my soul. He also has brought healing the same way through my doctors. The best way I could think of to tell you how all of you have helped me is written in poem I have enclosed.*

The poem is titled: "A TOUCH", Author Unknown

*Babies need a mother's touch. A baby left in a crib without physical contact will die. It needs to be loved and cuddled.  
Children need a touch to soothe their hurts and bumps. They need a goodnight kiss and tender loving care.  
Teenagers need a touch, a hug when their world seems upside down and no one understands.  
Wives need a touch, a clasp of the hand, a husband's encircling arms when the going gets rough.  
Husbands need a touch, to show appreciation for their hard work, their love support.  
Our friends need a touch, a hand on the shoulder when they're hurting. They need to hear us say, "I care about, you, I love you, and I want to do what I can to make it easier for you." Or at times they may need a touch without words, just letting them know we're there, we may not know what to say, but we can show we care about what is happening in their lives and we're ready to help when they need us.  
A touch can release those pent up feelings, can produce a flood of tears that will bring healing to damaged emotions.  
A touch involves us personally in another person's life.  
We make their hurts become our concerns.  
The patient closes the letter with: Keep holding on to your patient's hands!! You are a blessing.*

As you return to your homes, remember what it is that make perianesthesia nurses unique and let people know what our contribution to patient care is. I would like to thank you for the opportunity of serving as your ASPAN President.

See you in PHILADELPHIA!!!!