



ASPAN

American Society of PeriAnesthesia Nurses

Message from the President

The Power of One

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I have yet to meet a nurse who continues to practice because the money, hours, prestige, and recognition are the rewards that matter. We may find it difficult to recognize the reasons we stay in nursing or we may not be able to articulate our motivation, but most of us know we make a difference.

The power of one individual nurse is not quantifiable. Who knows what influence you have had on colleagues, patients, and families in your years of practice? The differences you have made, when positive, affirming, and meaningful, are unique to you; you own those stories. They may not seem extraordinary but to patients who feel their care has been special, that difference is profound. Ask any nurse who has been a patient. One nurse, one attitude, one unexpected act of kindness can have the power to calm and connect, and to help patients achieve wholeness.

Nurses know that we cannot continue to practice in the same way every day, in spite of or due to the turbulence in health care. We are in the midst of it — whether the effects are evident in the statistics we collect, or more subtle in terms of staff morale and altered ability to provide high touch, high tech nursing care. The power (and the future) of nursing may be that we manage to deliver excellent care despite the flaws in the system.

Each nurse has the power to make decisions that are “values” based, and come from the core of our being. The ability to choose the path with heart, and follow it even when at the moment it is the more difficult and unpopular takes courage and perseverance. We all know nurses who take time when there is no time, who come through against strong odds, who do the ordinary in extraordinary ways. We can identify nurses who are role models and mentors — these nurses who make you feel better just by knowing them. They possess qualities beyond professionalism and expertise. It is often a combination of traits — integrity, decency, genuine passion — which sets them apart. They are rare and admirable. Nurses who engage in the practice of citizenship do far more than practice their profession. They bring a unique perspective to legislative, environmental, and health care issues. My first head nurse, Teddy McQuat, was dedicated to the special needs of neuro patients. Her passion and commitment continue to influence my nursing practice today. She was deeply disturbed by the number of senseless neck fractures in high school football players. It was her belief that these athletes were too young, and not strong enough to perform ‘head on’ tackles, like those acceptable in college. She was relentless in her efforts with the state legislature to enforce strict rules regarding the type of tackles acceptable in high school play.

I recently visited with many perianesthesia colleagues in San Diego. Their pride is evident in their daily practice of nursing, and in their volunteer work. They routinely travel with care teams to Mexico and provide health care for surgical patients. They return with a renewed appreciation for the standard of health care in the United States and the knowledge that they have contributed to the health and well being of those less fortunate.

Barbara Foley, an emergency room nurse from Boston, grew tired of seeing the results of car crashes related to alcohol, particularly among so many young patients. She and another nurse acted on their concerns and took their “show Co-Sponsored Seminars.” They presented graphic and vivid slides of mangled and disfigured victims of car crashes. Their program was so successful that after it was shown

statewide, the two nurses formed a specialty organization devoted to promoting awareness of alcohol related crashes. Barbara currently works for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), promoting injury prevention on a national level. She describes herself as an ordinary nurse; I see her as someone who took an extraordinary interest in a situation that demanded attention.

Barbara Foley emphasized the value of affecting the quality of life for all potential victims of vehicular crashes — one person at a time. She inspired me to bring information about the “Buckle Up America” initiative to the ASPAN Board this past April. The resolution printed in this issue of *Breathline* passed unanimously. We believe that injury prevention is a civic responsibility and supports our mission statement by providing public education and quality, cost effective care for patients.

ASPAN also provided handouts (which are available as an insert to this issue) with the ASPAN logo to perianesthesia nurses in attendance at the Philadelphia National Conference to assist them in patient/family education. Copies of these educational tools can be obtained from the National Office; nurses are encouraged to photocopy and share these handouts. Place them in surgical waiting rooms and hand them out to families.

Perianesthesia nurses interact with families and provide education in various settings. We have the opportunity to influence daily life and activities in a profound manner to help patients and their families. The care provided by dedicated nurses, one patient at a time, makes a meaningful difference for our patients and for the practice of nursing.