



# ASPAN

American Society of PeriAnesthesia Nurses

## Message from the President

### Perianesthesia Nurses Together – The Importance of Connection, Power of Community!

*November/December 2021*

**Jennifer Kilgore BSN RN CPAN**  
**ASPAN President 2021-2022**

Connection is the energy that exists between people when they feel seen, heard, and valued; when they can give and receive without judgment; and when they derive sustenance and strength from the relationship.<sup>1</sup> Perianesthesia nurses need connection with perianesthesia nurses! We need to be seen, heard, and valued. ASPAN is the place for this formidable connection. There is an energy like no other when I am with other perianesthesia nurses. We need each other!

#### **Why is Connection So Important?**

Connection builds trust. Every day, across America, patients put their trust in us. They trust us to care for them during a time of intense vulnerability, to provide for their safety, and to do so with the utmost respect and dignity. Establishing a healthy connection with patients and colleagues fosters trust. The sooner a connection is established, the quicker trust is established. Forming healthy connections is a simple tool for ensuring comfort and safety of our patients. Professional development and being engaged in ASPAN is essential because it equips perianesthesia nurses with the tools we need to do our best.

Connecting with our patients is at the very core of the care we deliver. It is through touch, eye contact, and voice they know we are present. Some years back, I recall transitioning from clipboards and paper to computers on wheels (COWs), or workstations on wheels (WOWs). It did not take very long for my patient to comment on the attention the computer demanded of me. At that moment, I was compelled to make extra effort to demonstrate my patient was front and center, not the computer. Patients need to know that while we are using a device to document, they are still our primary focus.

#### **My Own Well-being**

Connecting has a reciprocal effect as well. It is amazing to me how connecting with someone, even briefly, can give me what I need to carry on. There have been times, throughout my nursing career, I have struggled, felt down in the dumps, and suffered tragedy. Survival and resilience for me has come through connection with others.

Sometimes we may think that connecting with others is having a heart-to-heart talk, and it may be. But I believe there is more. Connections can be as simple as my walk, a smile, eye contact, or a nod. Connection is a pleasant interaction with a staff member, a shared laugh-out-loud joke, even a text message to a friend or family member. These actions can, to some degree, satisfy our innate need for community. Of course, one of my most favorite ways to connect with others is over a cup of fresh, hot coffee.

We have 'friends' on Facebook, shop online, learn online, and even work online. In the midst of a global pandemic, virtual has been warranted. For such a time as this, I am counting virtual meetings as a technological blessing. But there is so much more to the life of a perianesthesia nurse. Let us not forsake the magic of being together, in person. The robust dialogue that happens when we are together is magic!

#### **Encouragement**

I believe one of the greatest instruments we possess to battle fatigue and burnout is encouragement. We all need it, and we can all give it. Encouragement keeps us going. There have been times in my life I must

say I felt like quitting. When I look at the world today, read the headlines, or spend more than 30 seconds on social media, things seem bleak. It's overwhelming. This feeling of it's all just too much and this tiny little light I'm carrying might as well be invisible. It's so easy to feel defeated and want to give up. But I have found that a sliver of encouragement has the power to keep me going. On my journey as a perianesthesia nurse and emerging leader in ASPAN, it is evident encouragement has served to move me forward. We all need encouragement!

COVID-19 brought a new level of stress and uncertainty to the world. Perianesthesia nurses have stepped into a whole new level of caring for patients and our communities. As I write this *Breathline* message, COVID-19 is surging once again and worse than ever in Mississippi. There is a major hurricane pressing on the Gulf Coast. My community, the institution to which I have devoted my entire career, is in turmoil with no end in sight. Uncertainty and stress will persist. Life going forward will look different. We are running a marathon, not just a sprint.

Let's focus on taking care of each other. We have all been impacted personally, professionally, socially, and economically – and there are people around us who are experiencing the same or even greater duress. Finding ways to revitalize yourself and act with compassion is essential.

As we approach the holiday season, our profession is amid a battle. It seems crazy the holiday season, for so many of us, will be filled with both joy and fear, but it is reality. We need each other now more than ever. Ecclesiastes 4:12 says, "though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken."<sup>2</sup> Together, we are stronger. I want to take this opportunity to say thank you and wish each of you and your loved ones a safe, joyful, and prosperous holiday season!

## REFERENCES

1. Brown B. *Rising Strong: How the Ability to Reset Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead*. Spiegel & Grau; 2015:182.
2. Ecclesiastes 4:12. Holy Bible. New International Version:700.