



ASPAN

American Society of PeriAnesthesia Nurses

Message from the President

Setting the Course for Our Bright Future

September/October 2011

Chris Price, MSN, RN, CPAN, CAPA
ASPAN President 2011-2012

It is hard to believe that ASPAN has been around for 31 years and counting! Far before our past leaders' visionary work and our professional organization's inception, clinical nurses understood the value of the nurse at the bedside: advocating for safe and quality care. As ASPAN moves toward its fourth decade, understanding clinical practice, evidence based research, and nursing education remain paramount goals for ASPAN's working strategic plan. As the nursing profession is now just beginning to position itself to significantly influence how healthcare reform will look, nurses are and will be influencing the future as never before in the history of our country.

As we seek our own safe passage as a profession, we need to be sure to prepare ourselves so we are eminently ready to meet the changes we will experience. A focus on nursing education is a key component of this preparation and, likewise, ASPAN has recognized this as a dynamic part of its strategic plan and compelling vision. Just as the nursing profession is recognized by the American public as the most ethical profession, this organization must ensure that our members and the public view ASPAN as the premiere and most trusted resource for perianesthesia education.

Future of Nursing

In October 2010, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) published *The Future of Nursing: Campaign for Action*. This landmark report strongly recommended maximizing advanced practice nurses to the fullest potential of their education and training. The IOM further reported that these providers are best suited to deliver healthcare in the most cost-effective way. The purpose of the report was to review and plan for future nursing needs as related to the impact of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), which will provide access to care for 32 million Americans. In addition, a review of the nursing workforce has shown some challenges and identified trends related to nursing's current workforce demographics and future demands for the evolving role of nurses, as well as education projections.

We know that between 1980 and 2008, RNs under age 30 decreased from 25% to 10.6% of the RN population. The average age of the nurse increased to 47 years, and declining enrollments and resources are looming on the horizon.¹ As a result of the IOM report, an action coalition has been formed to ensure that, "... all Americans have access to high quality, patient- centered care in which nurses contribute as essential partners in system- wide transformation."¹ State boards of nursing and state nursing organizations are forming groups to establish priorities within local, state and regional areas to design strategies for improving public and institutional policies regarding nursing and nurse faculty shortages. Through this "Campaign for Action", organizations are invited to apply to be deemed official Action Coalitions and receive technical assistance by the Center to Champion Nursing in America Campaign. The goal is to select up to 20 applicants during summer 2011. It is recommended that each state have one state-level action coalition. To date, there are 15 across the country.²

For the good of the public served, we nurses must choose to give careful consideration to our own education goals as well as the IOM's recommendations (which are as follows):³

- Nurses must practice to the full extent of their education and pursue advanced degrees
- Expand opportunities for nurses to lead collaborative improvement efforts
- The proportion of nurses with a baccalaureate degree must increase to 80 percent by 2020

- Nurses must be engaged in lifelong learning
- Nurse residency programs for the graduate nurse must be established
- Double the number of nurses with doctorates by 2020
- Enable nurses to lead change

A Professional Focus

When deciding to focus and take action on the future of your nursing career, please note that those recommendations which fall most closely within your span of control are those directly related to nursing education and nursing knowledge. You, and ASPAN, must collaboratively be prepared to focus on these needs/goals to achieve your individual and educational goals and a commitment to lifelong learning.

ASPAN, as an organization, and its Education Approver and Education Provider Committees support this shared commitment. ASPAN has begun critical steps in a journey to provide online educational opportunities for its members. ASPAN will continue to provide and promote scholarships to assure that you, our members, receive the resources and support you need to achieve your own professional goals.

I challenge each and every one of you to take a critical look at yourself, and to explore the steps in your practice needed to be taken in preparing for your education and your future. Only YOU can establish a timeline and make a commitment to meet the goal. During this journey, be it to achieve a BSN, specialty certification, MSN or even a doctorate level of education, remember to utilize resource articles available to you in the *Journal of PeriAnesthesia Nursing*, ASPAN's *Perianesthesia Nursing Standards and Practice Recommendations*, and other perianesthesia publications that support your practice. Make your projects and papers/thesis relevant to your own practice, and be sure to submit your work for publication in your own peer review journal. Your patients and colleagues will benefit from the work and information that you share. Utilize clinical practice network questions to expand your focus and the practice within your units, and share information with your peers regarding policy development, job descriptions, performance improvement measures and data collection tools. The resources are available to customize your efforts.

As perianesthesia nurses locally, regionally, nationally and worldwide, we will continue to face practice challenges, even as our educational goals and ideals are achieved. Our specialty nurses have always looked to ASPAN when safe practice seems threatened, new technology is introduced, and/or research is studied. In spite of the ongoing barrage of changes, ASPAN will not change its commitment to seek answers, provide ideals and encouragement, create unique educational opportunities and disseminate research findings. Just as you practice across the continuum to advocate for our vulnerable patients, so, too, will ASPAN remain the foundation to advocate for safe standards and practice recommendations. This foundation will remain based upon review of the current trends and practices you experience, and from your critical feedback as the practicing clinicians within our specialty. Indeed, be assured that ASPAN embraces its role to advocate for you and the knowledge base that you expect to have in order to provide the care and achieve the level of education that our patients so deserve.

REFERENCES

1. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, The registered nurse population: Findings from the 2008 national sample survey of registered nurses. Available at <http://bhpr.hrsa.gov/healthworkforce/rnsurvey2008.html> . Accessed August 23, 2011.
2. Center to Champion Nursing in America. Action coalitions: Technical assistance program. Available at <http://championnursing.org/action-coalitions> . Accessed August 23, 2011.
3. Future of Nursing-Campaign for Action. Recommendations and research priorities. Available at <http://thefutureofnursing.org/RecommendationsandResearchPriorities> , Accessed August 23, 2011