



# ASPAN

American Society of PeriAnesthesia Nurses

## Message from the President

### Detecting Greatness: The Proof is in Our Practice "I'M HERE."

*July/August 2017*

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Two months ago, the ASPAN family sat spellbound as Marcus Engel, the keynote speaker at ASPAN's 36<sup>th</sup> National Conference, stood before us explaining what compassionate care means to him, and what being truly present means to a patient. To Marcus, the simple words, "I'm here," spoken in the darkness and pain surrounding him, the gentle touch of a young woman's hand, assured him that he was not alone. At the age of 18, Marcus's life was irrevocably altered by a horrific car accident that shattered his face, mangled his body, and left him blind. He clung to the two words spoken by a caregiver he didn't know and couldn't see, "I'm here." In his book, *I'm Here: Compassionate Communication in Patient Care*, Marcus Engel says:

"...Those two little words are a verbal embrace, a warm, safe place of protection for your patient...Those words...give an anchor of security and reassurance."<sup>1</sup>

Nursing is a demanding profession. We must keep pace with a constantly shifting and uncertain healthcare environment as well as rapidly evolving technology. We are cognizant of legislative and regulatory actions which affect healthcare delivery and reimbursement. Traditional healthcare models no longer work with "pay for performance." We are constantly reminded to watch unit productivity, target and stop unnecessary waste, evaluate patient satisfaction scores based on an "always" or "never" scale, and strive to do more with diminishing resources. We live in a bean counter's world. Or do we?

Nurses assume that patients know our intention is to be kind, compassionate and caring. We are nurses because we care about people from all walks of life, and we want to be advocates for their care and safety. After all, nursing has ranked first among professions as the most ethical and honest for fifteen years in a row.<sup>2</sup> The science of nursing is advancing with research and evidence-based standards. Patient outcomes improve when we implement evidence-based nursing practices. But our patients need and deserve more from us. Historically, nursing is described as both an art and a science. In the immortal words of Florence Nightingale:

"Nursing is an art: and if it is to be made an art, it requires an exclusive devotion..."<sup>3</sup>

Why, then, are there days when we can't find the time to engage in the "art" of nursing? We are troubled and disappointed when patient satisfaction scores fall short of expectations. Low scores are a negative reflection, and a counterpoint on how our patients see us versus how we see ourselves in the role of caregiver. If meaningful patient communication is as simple as two words of reassurance and the gentle touch of a hand, isn't it time we rediscover the "art" of nursing? Even when patient turnover moves at the speed of light in the world of perianesthesia care, I have the time to let my patients know "I'm here." Right here. For each one of them.

#### REFERENCES

1. Engel M. *I'm Here: Compassionate Communication in Patient Care*. Kindle e-book, 2010.
2. American Nurses Association. Nurses Rank #1 Most Trusted Profession for 15th Year in a Row. Press Release, Dec 19, 2016. Available at:

<http://www.nursingworld.org/FunctionalMenuCategories/MediaResources/PressReleases/Nurses-Rank-1-Most-Trusted-Profession-2.pdf>. Accessed July 24, 2017.

3. Today in Science. Florence Nightingale Quotes. Available at: [https://todayinsci.com/N/Nightingale\\_Florence/NightingaleFlorence-Quotations.htm](https://todayinsci.com/N/Nightingale_Florence/NightingaleFlorence-Quotations.htm). Accessed May 6, 2017.