

2013 Nurse in Washington Internship (NIWI) Scholarship Report

By Sally Morgan, MS, RN, ANP-BC, ACNS-BC, GNP-BC

As director of governmental affairs for the Ohio PeriAnesthesia Nurses Association (OPANA), I was thrilled to receive a scholarship from ASPAN to attend the 2013 Nurse in Washington Internship (NIWI) Program. During my three day stay in Washington D.C., I met nurses from around the country who were eager to gain knowledge about legislative process and health advocacy. I was very excited to learn about the Nursing Community which is a forum for national professional nursing associations to provide one voice for one issue. Comprised of 57 organizations (including ASPAN), the Nursing Community builds consensus and advocates on a wide spectrum of healthcare and nursing issues including practice, education, and research and is committed to improving the health and health care of our nation by collaborating to support RNs. Their legislative platform supports healthcare reform to improve quality, reduce cost, and increase access; federal funding for nursing education, practice, and retention; and federal legislation that improves and advances nursing practice, education, and research.

The Nursing Community has identified 3 “asks” that support nursing. On our visit to Capitol Hill, all NIWI attendees presented the message supported by the Nursing Community and asked our legislators to:

- **Support \$251 million for the Nursing workforce Development Programs** (Title VIII administered by HRSA) -Due to the aging workforce, aging populations and increased demand for health services, the demand for RNs and APRNs continues to grow. Currently, Title VIII is the largest dedicated funding that supports all aspects of the nursing workforce including retention, recruitment and nursing education from entry level preparation through graduate study, as well as institutions that educate nurses for practice on rural and underserved communities. In light of the current budget demands, the Nursing Community is asking for the same amount as received last year.
- **Support \$150 million in funding for the National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR)** - A continually changing healthcare system demands innovation and evidence in quality patient care. The NINR is one of the 27 Institutes and Centers at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and funds research that lays the groundwork for evidence-based nursing practice. Compared to medical research which focuses on curing disease, nursing research is conducted to prevent disease. Nurse-scientists funded by NINR examine ways to improve care models to deliver safe, high-quality, and cost-effective health services to the nation. Nurse scientists, often in collaboration with physicians and other researchers are vital in setting the national research agenda. The budget for NINR in FY2012 was \$144. 579 million which is 0.4% of the overall \$30.7 billion NIH budget.
- **Support \$20 Million for Nurse-Managed Health Clinics (NMHCs)** – Access to health services, in particular, primary care and health promotion are in demand. NMHCs are health delivery sites managed by advanced registered nurses (APRNs) and staffed by an interdisciplinary team that may include physicians, physician assistants, pharmacists, and social workers to provide primary care,

health promotion, and disease prevention to individuals with limited access regardless of their ability to pay. NMHCs serve as critical access points to keep patients out of the emergency room, saving the healthcare system millions of dollars annually.

Time was provided throughout the 3 day program to network with other NIWI attendees and I was grouped with Ohio attendees for our Capitol Hill visit. Together, we met with staff in our senators' offices and each had the opportunity to meet with our representative. Staffers were pleased that nurses were presenting the same message and commented that they were visited by a nursing group the day before with the same requests.

I learned a great deal during this program and look forward to following up with my legislators on these issues. I was privileged to be a part of NIWI and very proud of ASPAN for being a participating member of the Nursing Organizations Alliance and the Nursing Community. There are over 3 million RNs in the United States and we can positively impact healthcare by having the power of unified advocacy.