

2023 ICPAN Conference Scholarship Report: Amsterdam, The Netherlands

By Elizabeth A. Steffen BSN RN CAPA

I had the privilege to represent ASPAN at the 6th ICPAN Conference in Amsterdam. The theme of the conference was “The World Starts Outside Your Comfort Zone”. There were four main pillars of the conference: The Sustainable Green Recovery, Innovation in Perioperative Nursing, Managing Workplace Stress, and Perioperative Nursing Education. Ten countries were represented at the conference, including the United States.

ASPAN is one of the founding members of ICPAN. What started as brain-storming and networking session after the BARNA (British Anesthetic and Recovery Nurses Association) Conference, in 2009 ICPAN was born. The first conference was held in Toronto in 2011. The vision of ICPAN is to promote global excellence in perianesthesia nursing through networking, sharing of practice standards and encouraging and promoting collaboration on research and evidence-based practices.

Over two and a half days, participants attended presentations by keynote speakers as well as breakout sessions. A field trip took participants to different medical centers in Amsterdam. On the last day, participants were divided into networking groups. Each group, working with the pillars of the conference, developed initiatives they felt they could take back to their healthcare systems. The initiatives were then shared with the conference at large.

I had four major takeaways from the conference. The first, that being able to communicate with others is not a given. Our opening keynote speaker spoke of the different ways we communicate. The points were: to learn the different styles of communicating, how to appreciate the difference, and to learn from each other. Secondly, we are more connected than we are divided. A third takeaway is nurses are held in high regard by the public. We should use this platform to make a difference. The fourth was that we must take care of ourselves, or we are no good to anyone.

We now live in a world that has forgotten how to communicate and care for one another. If we, as nurses, can step out of our own comfort zones, the world we would like to see can start here. We can hold ourselves accountable and set the example we would like to see in the world. I had the privilege of visiting Anne Frank’s house while in Amsterdam. She is quoted as saying, “How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.” I believe as nurses, if we practice her belief, what a wonderful world this will be.