EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: The mission for COEH is to protect the health and well-being of nurses and their patients and communities through policy advocacy, programs, and training on the prevention and control of occupational and environmental hazards in relation to healthcare settings.

BACKGROUND: The American Nurses Association (ANA) Center for Occupational and Environmental Health (COEH) provides occupational and environmental health expertise on issues related to the nursing profession and healthcare industry. Recognizing workplace health and safety as a core issue for ANA, the Center serves ANA in fulfilling this function for its members and leading the nursing profession at-large.

Pandemic, Avian and Seasonal Influenza

Background:
Pandemic influenza is a virulent viral strain of influenza causing a global outbreak of influenza spreading from human to human because there is little natural immunity in the human population. Pandemic preparedness planning is critical to reduce the lethal impact a global pandemic can have on human suffering and death. Avian influenza continues to threaten to be the next pandemic influenza if the H5N1 influenza virus mutates to allow for human to human transmission. Respiratory protection in the form of an N-95 respirator vs. surgical masks had been the subject of great debate in guidelines for pandemic and avian influenza planning, including the national pandemic plan.

Update:
Earlier in 2006, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) established a Mask Use Working Group for the purpose of exploring several important issues regarding the use of surgical masks and respirators during an influenza pandemic. The Working Group’s charge was, in part, to address questions and concerns that have been raised since publication of the HHS
Pandemic Influenza Plan (http://www.hhs.gov/pandemicflu/plan/) in November, 2005. A draft document was prepared that briefly reviews the literature on influenza virus transmission, pathogenesis, and control; identifies some of the leading research needs in this area; and provides recommendations on surgical mask and respirator use in the healthcare and community settings. By invitation of the Mask Use Working Group, ANA reviewed and provided comments on the draft document. The revised guidelines were released on October 17, 2006 and can be found at www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/healthcare/maskguidancehc.html.

Influenza Vaccination

Background:

Seasonal influenza is an annual challenge as it claims an associated 36,000 deaths and approximately 200,000 hospitalizations annually, predominantly among persons aged > 65 years and those < 2 years of age in addition to persons of any age who have medical conditions placing them at risk of complications from influenza.

According to CDC, healthcare workers have an annual influenza vaccination rate of 36% to 43%. This number is typical of the dismal rate of vaccination for this group despite the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices ranks healthcare workers in the list of priority groups. Patients are at risk of becoming infected with influenza from a healthcare worker with asymptomatic or symptomatic influenza. Discussion is being generated to mandate seasonal influenza vaccination for healthcare workers due to insufficient voluntary acceptance of the vaccine in this group, including nurses.

ANA launched a campaign entitled “Everyone Deserves a Shot at Fighting Flu” in November, 2005 to address the unacceptably low rate of acceptance of seasonal influenza vaccine amongst nurses and other health care workers. Media interviews and press releases were held to report on the results of a survey ANA conducted with funding from GlaxoSmithKline to identify barriers to receiving and accepting the vaccine.

Update:

ANA participated in a working group whose goal was to prepare strategies to address improving influenza vaccination rates of health care workers in the 2006-2007 seasonal influenza season as the short term goal. The work group was formed following the June 22, 2006 meeting of the National Influenza vaccine Summit in Chicago, Illinois. The summit was co-sponsored by the American Medical Association and CDC. A letter to healthcare workers was prepared by the group and signed by William Plested, III, MD, President of the American Medical Association and Julie Louise Gerberding, MD, MPH, Director, CDC. The work was completed by the end of August. Long term planning is anticipated to result from this work.

The ANA influenza backgrounder, other updated information and a letter from President Becky Patton to nurses encouraging them to get influenza immunization was place on the ANA website. The Safe Needles, Save Lives campaign was linked to this initiative to remind nurses to use safety engineered needles while administering the vaccine.
ANA participated in the Influenza Virus Vaccine Scientific Advisory Board meeting sponsored by CSL Biotherapies, Inc. on November 8-9, 2006. The primary goal of the meeting was to provide guidance and recommendations for educational programs and initiatives to support the introduction of CSL Biotherapies’ new influenza virus vaccine.

ANA was represented at the roundtable entitled “Improving Influenza Vaccination Rates in People with Diabetes” held by the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases in Washington, DC on November 10th and 11th, 2006. The round table was held to develop a consensus on ways to overcome vaccination barriers and encourage increased influenza immunization rates among this high risk group. The ANA presentation on this topic included insights into the ANA’s approach to this issue.

National Occupational Research Agenda (NORA)

Background:
The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)-, in partnership with the National Safety Council celebrated the success of the first decade of the National Occupational Research Agenda (NORA) and launched its second decade at the NORA Symposium in April, 2006, in Washington D.C. For the past nine years the National Occupational Research Agenda (NORA) has served as a framework to guide national occupational safety and health research efforts. Town Hall Meetings have been sponsored by the National Institute of Occupational Health and Safety (NIOSH) in preparation for setting a new research agenda for the next decade.

ANA, through its constituent member associations (CMAs), contacted nurse members across the country to testify at the Town Hall Meetings to ensure that the occupational safety and health concerns of nurses be included. ANA’s priority topic areas for occupational research include: musculoskeletal disorders; chemical exposures; worker fatigue; bloodborne pathogen exposure; respiratory protection and workplace violence.

Update:
In September 2006, staff of Center for Occupational and Environmental Health attended the Healthcare and Social Assistance (HCSA) Sector work group kick-off meeting in Atlanta GA. Topics discussed were other participants to include in council, next steps to be taken by work group, and most important problems faced by the HCSA sector. It was decided that one immediate next step will be preparation of a white paper on healthcare which can be used to identify gaps/research needs, and to justify the need for increase in health care research funding. The white paper will be the work of the entire work group, and the group planned to meet again in 6 months in order to discuss a first draft.

The most important problems faced by this sector were determined to be many that directly affect nurses, some of these were the need to: reduce high incidence of acute and cumulative MSDs; reduce hazardous chemical use and product waste from healthcare facilities; create a work environment to promote corporate safety culture and work organization; reduce risk of exposure to infectious agents; study safety of safer needles.
Environmental Health

**Background:** ANA continues involvement in environmental health related issues partially funded through a grant received from the Beldon Fund. The work included a lobbyist meeting with a special session devoted to chemical policy held in September, 2005, with environmental health focus in September 2006, and an update of the speaker’s bureau and formation of environmental health task force/committees within ANA/CMA’s to develop environmental health tools.

The ANA communication vehicles such as the American Nurse Today, the Insider and the American Nurse have been utilized to disseminate information. ANA continues the collaborative relationship with Health Care Without Harm and Hospitals for a Healthy Environment. ANA participates in the Nurses Work Group monthly conference calls to offer opportunity for nurses to be advocates in environmental health and is offering continuing nursing education hours for the educational calls. ANA has signed on to policy letters, position statements, amendments and other vehicles when opportunity to offer support consistent with ANA positions are presented. Other actions by ANA in advocating for environmental health include the following resolutions:

- Reduction of Healthcare Production of Toxic Pollutants (1997)
- Inappropriate use of Antimicrobials in Agriculture (2004)
- Environmental Health Principles in Nursing Practice (2004)
- Nursing Practice, Chemical Exposures and Right-to-Know (2006)

**Update:**

COEH staff attended a retreat with State Alliance for Federal Environmental Reform (SAFER) that was focused on coordinating state environmental activities that would support a national Comprehensive Chemical Policy Reform. This retreat was held at Blue Mountain Center near Albany, New York over November 9-12, 2006. COEH Staff fostered an agreement that SAFER coalitions that ANA would have equal partnership to participate and guide future decisions regarding chemical policy reform both on a state as well as national level.

COEH launched the ANA speaker’s bureau listserve, called ANA-RNNoHarm-Speakers Bureau. The goal of the listserve is to create a resource to help members spread the knowledge about environmental health issues gained not only in the RN No Harm training program, but through other educational venues and in nursing practice. The speaker’s bureau listserve will provide a community of mentorship for nurses who feel called to make a difference in the environmental health of the community. Members will be encouraged to speak and write on environmental health topics as opportunities arise. These opportunities will be reported on in the listserve.

**Handle With Care® Campaign**
Background:
The Handle with Care® launched in 2003 campaign mounted a profession-wide effort to prevent back and other musculoskeletal injuries through greater education and training, and increased use of assistive equipment and patient-handling devices. The campaign also seeks to reshape nursing education and federal and state ergonomics policy by highlighting the ways technology-oriented safe-patient handling benefits patients and the nursing workforce.

Update:
ANA representative attended a series of meetings at the Patient Safety Center of Inquiry in Tampa, Florida in October, 2006. Topics included validation of patient handling risk assessment tool, functional statement and core competencies for unit based peer leaders in safe patient handling, toolkit for evidence based curriculum for SPHM in schools of nursing and a toolkit for monitoring effectiveness of SPHM programs.

ANA participated in developing solutions for high risk patient handling tasks in orthopedics as the beginning of a project for the National Association of Orthopedic Nurses (NAON) to develop algorithms for use in this specialty. ANA collaborated with NAON, National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and the Patient Safety Center of Inquiry on this project. The work will continue.

ANA presented about the Handle with Care® campaign and SPHM at the NJSNA “Nurse in Trenton” day in September, 2006 at the New Jersey Statehouse. Workplace violence information was included in the presentation due to workplace violence legislation pending as well.

7th Annual Safe Patient Handling and Movement Conference

Background:
Since 2000, an annual safe patient handling and movement conference hosted by the Department of Veterans Affairs, James A. Haley Veterans Hospital has been held to provide participants with up to date information, feature best practices, see new technology available and to present research findings related to safe patient handling and movement. ANA has been a co-sponsor of the conference since 2003.

Update:
The 7th annual Safe Patient Handling and Movement Conference will be held at Disney’s Contemporary Resort in Lake Buena Vista, Florida on March 12-16, 2007. ANA is co-sponsoring this upcoming conference.

Safe Patient Handling and Movement Nursing School Curriculum Module

Background:
ANA received funding in 2004 from NIOSH to launch the Safe Patient Handling and Movement Nursing School Curriculum pilot project. ANA partnered with the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and the Tampa Veterans Administration Patient Safety Center of Inquiry to develop the curriculum and introduce safe patient handling and movement concepts into the curriculum of nursing schools. Twenty-six schools of nursing served as test sites and three served as control sites. Invitations were extended to faculty to attend the 5th Safe Patient Handling and Movement Conference (2005) as part of preparation to implement the curriculum which was developed as part of the grant. A focused post-conference session prepared the nursing school faculty to implement the curriculum.

**Update:**

Due to delays in data analysis resulting from some test sites implementing the test curriculum in the Spring, 2006 semester, ANA requested an extension of 12 months to allow for completion of data analysis. The project was to have been completed by August, 2006. Data analysis was completed in early November, 2006.

One article about the project titled, *Preventing musculoskeletal Disorders in Nurses: A Safe Patient Handling Curriculum Module for Nursing Schools,* has been accepted for publication in Nurse Educator in March/April 2007. Two additional manuscripts are planned for submission at a later date.

**H2E (Hospitals for a Healthy Environment)**

**Background:**

In 1998, the American Hospital Association (AHA) and the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) signed a landmark agreement to advance pollution prevention efforts in our nation's health care facilities. The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which is the cornerstone of the H2E initiative, calls for:

- Virtually eliminating mercury-containing waste from health care facilities' waste streams by 2005
- Reducing the overall volume of waste (both regulated and non-regulated waste) by 33 percent by 2005 and by 50 percent by 2010
- Identifying hazardous substances for pollution prevention and waste reduction opportunities, including hazardous chemicals and persistent, bioaccumulative, and toxic pollutants

As a result of this agreement, Hospitals for a Healthier Environment (H2E) was created. Funding has primarily been from the EPA. In 2000 ANA and Healthcare Without Harm (HCWH) joined as partners. In that time H2E has been promoted in the healthcare sector with major efforts of ANA and as of March 8, 2006, the Hospitals for a Healthy Environment program had 1,154 partners representing 6,317 facilities: 1,287 hospitals, 3,064 clinics, 1,009 nursing homes and 957 other types of facilities. These partners are health care facilities that have pledged to eliminate mercury and reduce waste consistent with the overall goals of H2E.
Update:

COEH staff has developed plans to contact and involve nursing in facilities that are H2E members. A letter has been developed that will be signed by ANA representatives and sent to the Chief Nursing Officers (CNO) of facilities which are new members of H2E. The letter will act as an introduction to H2E, and will let the CNO know that a criteria to be an H2E partner, they will appoint an H2E Nurse Liaison from among the staff nurses. The name H2E Nurse Liaison will be forwarded to H2E and ANA. A second welcome letter will be sent to H2E Nurse Liaison from ANA. The CMA in the state where the facility is located will be provided with the H2E Nurse Liaison’s name in order to act as a resource for her. The planning of this process was completed by the end of January, 2006, and is planned on being implemented in March 2007.

Health Care Without Harm (HCWH)

Background:
HCWH campaign was formed in 1996 to address the serious pollution problem of dioxin, a potent carcinogen, associated with medical waste incineration. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency had identified medical waste incineration as the leading source of dioxin in 1994. As of 2006, HCWH had more than 440 member organizations in 55 countries working together to change health care practices that result in environmental pollution contributing to disease. ANA collaborates with HCWH participating in the Nurses Work Group (NWG), and as an H2E partner and in other environmental health work and projects. ANA participates in monthly NWG conference calls.

Update:
ANA attended the HCWH annual meeting on October 3, 2006 to October 6, 2006. The meeting was a four day retreat structured so the various work groups within HCWH’s campaign can hold discussions while aiming to set the priorities and work plans for the next year. This meeting celebrated the tenth anniversary of HCWH. The event was held at Whispering Pines Conference Center in West Greenwich, RI. A group of 47 participants attended the meeting including 4 representatives from the NWG. The NWG formalized the 2007 NWG priorities during this meeting. Other groups attending the meeting were representatives from H2E, Physicians for Social Responsibility, University of Maryland, Commonweal and other environmental health related organizations.

In January, 2007 ANA along with HCWH issued a press release regarding a new U.S. National Toxicology Program (NTP) that report raises “serious concern” that sick infants may be harmed by DEHP-containing PVC medical devices. The NTP review is based on an extensive analysis of the latest science on DEHP exposure and toxicity. Despite longstanding claims by medical device manufacturers that the chemical is of no concern to humans, the NTP concluded otherwise. COEH will continue to monitor and work on this issue.

Principles of Environmental Health for Nursing Practice
**Background:**

In response to the 2004 Environmental Health Principles in Nursing Practice resolution, the Congress on Nursing Practice and Economics (CNPE) early in 2006 formulated a workgroup to develop Environmental Health Principles for Nursing Practice based on the Precautionary Principle to provide a foundation for implementation within nursing practice.

Staff of ANA’s Center for Environmental and Occupational Health (COEH) has been active in the development of the *Principles of Environmental Health for Nursing Practice*. This document is intended to provide assumptions and principles to guide registered nurses in providing nursing care in a manner that is environmentally safe for themselves, their patients and families, other healthcare workers, healthcare facilities and agencies, the local community, and our planet. This document will serve as a challenge to nurses to rediscover the traditional environmental health roots of the nursing profession. These *Principles* will be applicable in all settings where registered nurses practice and provide care. They will be based on sound and established science and accompanied with explanation. The workgroup expects to present the document to the CNPE, following a 60 day posting for comments on Nursing World, and in preparation for forwarding to the ANA Board of Directors for acceptance upon completion.

**Update:**

Principles were presented to the CNPE in September 2006 and approved for 60 day posting for comment on ANA’s web site where they will be posted until November 30, 2006. Comments were forwarded to COEH staff, and will be incorporated into final document as appropriate prior to coming before CNPE in February, 2007.

**Health and Safety**

**Presentations**

COEH presented a “Tour of the Occupational Health of Nurses” to a graduate level class at the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health on September 28, 2006. Numerous topics of interest were included featuring ANA’s various health and safety programs.

COEH presented a “Policy to Practice: Building the Foundations for an Industry-wide Approach to Chemical Policy Reform” to a graduate level class at Johns Hopkins School of Public Health on November 2, 2006. Topics covered included information about chemical policy reform proposed in the Louisville Charter, the European Union REACH law for chemical production and use, and problems with the current Toxic Substances Control Act that is enforced EPA. An overview of ANA’s involvement in lobbying against an ineffective Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) legislation that was pending vote on the House floor during the fall 2006 was also presented. Key methods for influencing chemical policy reform in the health care industry were also covered.
In November 2006, COEH staff gave two presentations at the American Public Health Association conference in Boston. One was a poster presentation to the Public Health Nursing sector titled "Moving Nursing's Environmental Health Concerns Through policies and Principles", and also an oral presentation titled "Preventing Needlesticks and Dioxin Production, A Safe Health Practice, Safe for the Patient, the Worker and the Environment".

In November 2006, COEH staff gave a presentation titled “Workplace Violence in the Health Care Setting” to District of Columbia Nurses Association members in Washington D.C.