



From Your ANA President

Celebrating our profession during National Nurses Week

ational Nurses Day (also Florence Nightingale's birthday) on May 12th, National Nurses Week marks the time when we honor the significant contributions of nurses past and present, and look ahead to the challenges facing our profession.

This year, "Nursing: A Profession and a Passion" is the theme of National Nurses Week. I believe that it exemplifies both the caring and the commitment necessary to excel in this demanding and rewarding profession. As nurses, we strive to strike a balance between providing quality care and maintaining the standards that continue to make nursing one of the most trusted and respected of all professionals. As an aside, it is not surprising to me that nurses have topped Gallup's professional honesty and ethics poll every year but one since 1999.

Mother's Day, 2007 immediately follows National Nurses Week. I would like to express my gratitude to all the nurses who balance the demands of their careers with the demands of their families. I know how difficult it can be when juggling family and career responsibilities. As care givers in both their personal and professional lives, those nurses deserve all our respect, and our thanks. I speak from personal experience; my own mother is also a nurse and I am proud to say her dedication to her own career and active participation in ANA to advance the profession inspired my own career path and that of my sister, who is also a registered nurse. At an early age I learned how important her position was as a registered nurse in a busy emergency room. She and her fellow nurses made the difference in literally thousands of individuals' lives just like you.

Part of nursing's proud tradition is our response in times of trial. Nurses have always answered the call of service in war and disaster. You see it first hand watching the nightly news with nurses caring for our soldiers. One of our goals at the ANA is to provide a guideline for maintaining the highest possible standard of care, even in the wake of a disaster. That is why ANA is hosting its first policy conference, Nursing Care in Life, Death and Disaster, scheduled for June 20-22, 2007 in Atlanta, Georgia. Our goal is to start a dialogue with nurses in every specialty, of every level of experience,

to determine how to deal with a crisis situation while still providing the quality of care that is the hallmark of the nursing profession.

The nursing profession faces significant challenges. Our population is aging; according to the most recent statistics from the Government Accounting Office, 40% of all nurses will be older than age 50 by the year 2010. Health and safety concerns have prompted many nurses to consider leaving the profession, while more than 40% of hospital nurses reported being dissatisfied with their jobs. (Source: *Health Affairs*, 2001:20:43-53) When confronted with the dire prognostication for our profession, I am reminded of the words of Florence Nightingale, who said, "I think one's feelings waste themselves in words; they ought all to be distilled into actions which bring results." This is why ANA's work is so vital. ANA is dedicated to improving working conditions for nurses. Whether fighting for safer working conditions or lobbying for increased staffing or funding for nursing education, our actions are focused on keeping nurses on the job, for the benefit of the profession, the nation's health-care system, and the patients/clients.

This National Nurses Week, I encourage each of you to think about what actions you can take to improve your own working environments. Get involved in your nurses association at the state or national level. Write a letter to the local newspaper about a nursing issue that concerns you. Offer to speak at a local school to encourage others to consider nursing as a career. Each of us has the ability to be an emissary for the nursing profession; I can think of no better occasion than National Nurses Week to reach out to the community on behalf of nurses everywhere.

National Nurses Week should also be a time for nurses to reflect on their own accomplishments. I would like to express my gratitude to all nurses for their dedication to what I believe is the noblest of professions. I hope each of you has an opportunity to appreciate the rewards of such a fulfilling career, and to take pride in the professionalism and the passion that motivates all nurses.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rebecca M. Patton RN".

Rebecca M. Patton, MSN, RN, CNOR
President
American Nurses Association