



From Your ANA and ANF Presidents

Nursing's contribution to patient care

Editor's note: This month's column is cowritten by Rebecca Patton (above left) and Margarete L. Zalon (above right), President of the American Nurses Foundation.

WE HAVE STORIES TO TELL about nurses and nursing practice—and we are increasingly called on to tell them. Nursing practice needs to be based on stories from research and the accumulation of research findings that provide sound evidence for practice.

More than 50 years ago, the American Nurses Association (ANA) decided nurses needed to know exactly what nurses do. This decision spawned the idea of examining nurses' functions. Through ANA and 17 state nurses associations, nurses across America donated money for these nurse function studies, which took place from 1950 to 1955. During this time the ANA board decided ANA should provide a way to support efforts to understand the scientific basis for nursing practice. This led to establishment of the American Nurses Foundation (ANF) in 1955. In 1958, results of the early nurse function studies were published in the book *20,000 Nurses Tell Their Story* (Hughes, Hughes & Deutscher).

Over the years, the ANF has helped nurse researchers tell their stories about nursing and the impact of their interventions across the broad spectrum of our practice. These researchers have gone on to tell stories about how their study results have influenced improvements and changes in practice and policy.

Since 1955, the ANF has funded more than 950 researchers. The list of ANF scholars is a "who's who" in nursing research. More importantly, these scholars' contributions have provided a foundation for nursing science and shaped the nature of nursing research. ANF provided the seed money that enabled the researchers to complete rigorous, high-quality nursing research and helped them make the transition to becoming leading researchers.

Examples include Rita Pickler, who developed a method for successfully transitioning premature babies to oral feedings; Patricia Pearce, currently investigating the physical activity of children and adolescents; Norma Metheny, who has devoted her research career to determining the best practices for feeding-tube placement; Graham MacDougall, who explores strategies to improve memory in cognitively impaired adults; Willa Doswell, who examined the effects of swaddling on crack-exposed

neonates; Vicki Hines-Martin, whose research provided insight into the experiences of African-American caregivers of the mentally ill; and Eileen Lake, whose research on nursing expertise led her to study the impact of staffing on pressure ulcers and falls. Multiply this work, and we have an astounding story about the power of research to inform practice.

Just think of the stories we could tell if the ANF could support 10 times as many researchers as it currently does; think of what that would do for nursing and our patients. Think of how much more we could do if every ANA member gave \$10 to the ANF and each of us asked 10 nurse colleagues to give to the ANF, who in turn could reach across America to ask 10 of their friends to give to the ANF.

These gifts would enable us to expand the science undergirding nursing practice, help novice nurses become more competent, enable experienced nurses to refine their knowledge and expertise, help members of the interdisciplinary team understand nurses' contributions to patient care outcomes, and help lawmakers and policymakers understand what resources nurses need to safely and effectively deliver the best nursing care.

Just envision the ANF funding not one but 10 nurses to research staffing issues; 10 to study how to reduce healthcare disparities; 10 to study how to help nurses, families, and caregivers care for an aging population; and 10 to explore how to promote the growth and development of preterm infants. Just think about the ways this research could improve nursing practice and save lives.

Please help us by giving a gift to the ANF this holiday season so we can expand and strengthen the foundation of nursing practice. Such a gift will help us do more for our profession and the patients we serve. To make a gift, please visit www.anfonline.org. Best wishes to each of you for a happy holiday season.

Handwritten signature of Rebecca M. Patton in black ink.

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