



The APHON Advocacy Correspondent

Welcome to the Advocacy Correspondent, a quarterly offering from the Association of Pediatric/Hematology Oncology Nurses. The goal of this newsletter is to inform members about legislative and regulatory issues impacting the profession of pediatric hematology/oncology nursing and the patients we serve.

****This is a special edition of the Advocacy Correspondent highlighting the Nurse in Washington Internship Program (NIWI) from the perspective of the 2015 APHON NIWI scholarship winners; continue to send your health policy and advocacy news to Jordan at jwildermuth@aphon.org.***

Health Care: The Collision of Practice and Policy

By: Beth Savage

I had a good feeling as I set out for Washington, D.C. on March 14th. For the first time that I could recall, it was a traffic-free drive from my home in New Jersey down I-95. Additionally, for finally after what seemed like an eternity, the temperatures in the Mid-Atlantic region were expected to exceed 30 degrees! With these good omens in mind, I knew my time at the Nurses in Washington Internship was going to be a unique and great opportunity.

Coordinated by the Nursing Organizations Alliance, the NIWI is a three day “boot camp” preparing nurses to take an active role in public policy and advocacy. Courtney and I were fortunate to be chosen by APHON as this year’s recipients of scholarships allowing us to attend this event. The Nursing Alliance is a coalition that brings together professional nursing organizations with the goal of advancing the profession through advocacy. This three-day event was a crash course on identifying pressing issues facing nurses, developing a strategic communication plan, and then bringing that plan to our legislative representatives on Capitol Hill.



The first two days were spent listening to fantastic speakers discuss the three identified “asks” to help us become experts in each area. The “ask” were issues identified by the Alliance prior to the internship. The asks included the expansion of professional privileges for advanced practice nursing, increased funding of the National Institutes of Nursing Research branch of the NIH, and the continuation of federal funding of graduate nursing education. As an advanced practice nurse pursuing my doctoral degree, I was thrilled!

A number of professional nursing organizations and the Veterans Administration were represented on the educational panels. There was a panel of professional government advocates and another consisting of legislative assistants to provide us with tip and boost our confidence before our meeting with legislators. Marla Weston, RN, PhD, FAAN, the Chief Executive Officer of the American Nurses Association was a featured a speaker as well.

After establishing our strengths and strategy our group of New Jersey nurses, representing many different specialties and practice settings, set out on Day 3 to meet with members of Congress. Beyond the education I received, the friendships I made and the excitement of entering the Capitol as an expected guest, this opportunity was a tremendous eye-opener. At each Congressional office, our meetings were productive discourses. Whether we were meeting with legislative aides or the districts' elected representatives, our conversations were interactive and informative, to both sides. I found that our group was appreciated for the expertise we brought to the table and more importantly, for the value of our work as nurses.

I am grateful for this opportunity. It was exciting and educational, but more importantly, empowering. I plan to treat this experience as a launching point. Already I find myself thinking about the opportunities and obstacles facing my nursing practice and my education endeavors very differently. Health care and politics are colliding today in an unprecedented way. Nurses have the opportunity to emerge from this period of uncertainty in a very powerful and important position in our nation's health care structure. I discovered, through this opportunity, that I cannot discredit the value and strength of our voices.

Nursing Advocacy: One for All and All for One **Courtney E. Sullivan, MSN RN CPHON CPNP-AC**

Policy and advocacy for nurses and the nursing profession is something in which I recently became interested. Through my work with nurses in low-middle income countries, I soon realized the vital role advocacy played in establishing nursing as a valued profession within the United States. Nursing as a global profession faces similar issues such as: workforce shortages, limited education programs and educators, increased health care demands, and imperfect healthcare delivery systems. Nursing is also not recognized as a profession in many parts of the world. Nurses represent the largest group of health care professionals world-wide, and are essential to achieving high-quality patient outcomes. For example, a patient may have surgery in a state-of-the art facility with a world-renown surgeon, but lacking quality perioperative nursing care and resources, the patient is at higher risk of experiencing infectious complications and death.

Nursing is an essential structural component within healthcare delivery systems and impacts the overall health of populations. Nurses have important insight to share with policy-makers on behalf of patients, families, and the profession. The unified, caring voice of nurses is still realizing its full potential and essential place in health policy and advocacy.

The Nurse in Washington Internship provided a valuable foundation for health policy and advocacy. The three day conference offered opportunity for role play and sessions by nursing association leaders, legislative staffers, and lobbyists. Seventy-five representatives from twenty-nine states and thirty-one nursing organizations participated in the event. Political and professional experience ranged within the



group from novice to expert; all shared the common bond of nursing and interest to advocate for patients, nurses, and quality health care.

A message from Marla Weston, Chief Executive Officer, American Nurses Association, was particularly noteworthy. When discussing a particular “ask” with a congressman or staffer, Marla recommended appealing to the heart, head, and health of an issue. She noted that it is important to get your point across clearly and precisely, and to include: how the issue is personal to you, rationale in support/opposition of the related bill, and how the policy impacts constituent’s health. It was recommended by all speakers and conference organizers to leave behind reference material. Another valuable take-away was that health advocacy is best accomplished through long-lasting relationships with your congressman and his/her staff.

With the help of the sessions, handouts, and practicing my “asks” I felt prepared for my first meetings on Capitol Hill. I met with Representative Steve Cohen and staff, as well as staff from the offices of Senators Lamar Alexander and Bob Corker. All were friendly and approachable; they readily engaged in conversation regarding the issues I presented. I requested their support of the following three issues: funding for Nursing Workforce Development Programs (Title VIII of the Public Health Service Act), funding for the National Institute of Nursing Research (National Institutes of Health budget request), and recognizing advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) as full practice providers in the Veterans Health Administration (Veterans Access to Quality Healthcare Act of 2015) and in its Nursing Handbook.

Each of these issues fuels quality nursing practice and patient care. Programs like the Nursing Workforce Development programs are a vital source of funding for nursing students, institutions, and future nursing faculty. With an increasingly aging and complex patient population, it is essential to produce highly skilled nurses and faculty capable of meeting this demand. Nursing research is instrumental in leading the advancement of nursing practice and provides supportive evidence for high-quality, cost-effective patient care. Nursing research conducted through the National Institute of Nursing Research contributes to improved population health through health promotion, disease prevention and management, quality of life, and end-of-life care. Full practice authority for APRNs would enable APRNs to practice within the full scope of their training and education. Currently the scope of APRN practice is determined by state and limits the scope of practice. Through recognition of APRNs as full practice providers within the VHA, veterans would have increased access to high quality and cost-effective care from providers already practicing within the VHA.

I am grateful to the Association of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology Nurses for awarding me the opportunity to participate in the Nurse in Washington Internship. It further opened my eyes to the importance of nursing policy and advocacy. Regardless of professional experience or specialty, nurses are key contributors to building a quality healthcare delivery system, and can positively impact the profession of nursing and patient care.

Upcoming Alliance for Childhood Cancer Action Days

The Alliance for Childhood Cancer has announced that this year's Childhood Cancer Action Days in Washington, DC is scheduled for June 15-16, 2015.

Organizational members of the Alliance for Childhood Cancer will host a two-day event that includes issues and advocacy training, and pre-arranged Capitol Hill visits with Congressional Representatives and their staff. The Alliance’s goal is to provide the childhood cancer community - parents, children, healthcare professionals and others with the opportunity to visit their Representatives on Capitol Hill and advocate for the important childhood cancer issues currently before Congress. For more

information or to register to attend please visit the [Alliance website](#).

APHON Endorses the Advancing Hope Act and the Kids' Innovative Drugs Initiative

APHON has joined with other organizations in [endorsing](#) both the Advancing Hope Act and the Kids' Innovative Drugs Initiative (KIDS). The Advancing Hope Act permanently reauthorizes the Creating Hope Act to continue the program of pediatric priority review vouchers as an incentive for pediatric rare disease drug development. KIDS would provide access to unapproved and abandoned adult drugs through reforms to the Pediatric Research Equity Act (PREA) and the Best Pharmaceuticals for Children Act (BPCA).

APHON Sings on to Funding Priorities for NIH and NCI

APHON joined with members of the Alliance for Childhood Cancer in [thanking](#) co-chairs of the Childhood Cancer Caucus, Representatives Michael McCaul (R-TX) and Chris Van Hollen (D-MD) for their support. The Alliance also outlined funding priorities and specific requests for report language related to childhood cancer.

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