THE VALUE OF NURSING

It is very exciting that the World Health Organization has extended the International Year of Nurse and Midwife through 2021 to recognize the “dedication and sacrifice” of the millions of health care workers on the COVID-19 front line. This is an opportunity to showcase and celebrate the work of nurses and midwives, highlight the challenging conditions they often face, and advocate for increased investments in the nursing and midwifery workforce. Nurses are valued in all they do. This issue, “The Value of Nursing,” shows us evidence of that.

Our authors share with you how nurses have added tremendous value during the pandemic, value while being on boards, through nurse recognition, through innovative projects, regulation, and more. Dr Polly Pittman and colleagues write about the failure of our current fee-for-service health care system to adequately respond to patient needs or to offer financial sustainability. They talk about the value of nursing through the lens of value-based payment system. Nurses are valued in all they do. This issue, “The Value of Nursing,” shows us evidence of that.

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On another note, I am concerned about the looming national nursing shortage and with those nurses leaving the profession. I spoke to a young nurse recently and she had been working in a neonatal intensive care unit for a little over a year and told me she wanted to do something different. I mentored her, offered suggestions, and after a few months, she decided to take a job in a high-tech company, unrelated to health care. She told me she was disillusioned with nursing and although she loved taking care of patients and families, she didn’t want to continue. This could be a trend and it is of great concern, especially postpandemic. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics’ Employment Projections 2019-2029, registered nursing is listed among the top occupations in terms of job growth through 2029. The registered nurse (RN) workforce is expected to grow from 3 million in 2019 to 3.3 million in 2029, an increase of 221 900 or 7%. The Bureau also projects 175 900 openings for RNs each year through 2029 when nurse retirements and workforce exits are factored into the number of nurses needed in the United States (aacnnursing.org). We need to produce more than 175 000 new nurses nationwide each year. How will we accomplish this when nursing schools turned away 80 407 qualified applicants from baccalaureate and graduate nursing programs in 2019 due to an insufficient number of faculty, clinical sites, classroom space, and clinical preceptors, as well as budget constraints (aacnnursing.org)? I am also concerned about the nurse faculty shortage. According to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, an article published in Nursing Outlook on “Retirements and Succession of Nursing Faculty in 2016-2025” by Drs Di Fang and Karen Kesten, one-third of the current nursing faculty workforce in baccalaureate and graduate programs is expected to retire by 2025. This finding underscores the urgency for the nursing education community to address the impending exodus of senior faculty and to develop younger faculty for succession. (aacn.org).

However, the salary gaps are still in place, in some areas up to 30 000 to 40 000 difference between clinical nurses and nurse faculty. Consider this: as nurses retire, they are encouraged to replace themselves with a new nurse by encouraging a student or neighbor or friend to consider...
a career in nursing. We are the most respected profession and we may be able to bridge the gap.

It has been a long year and as I write this, I have received both of my vaccinations and feel grateful and hopeful. Things are “opening up,” but we are seeing more mutations and we continue to wear a mask. Hopefully in a few months, we can see each other in person at a conference!

Thank you for all you do for nursing, our patients, and our communities. #waramask #ThisIsOurShot.

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REFERENCES
