



Reflection and action

Continuing to work together is key in 2021.

IN JUST A FEW WEEKS, a new year will be upon us. Our desire to focus on the future is natural and critically important when it comes to strategizing about healthcare practices and policies. But making good decisions for our patients, ourselves, and our communities as we move forward requires some reflection on what's transpired.

For most of us, 2020 has been a year like no other, and it will be analyzed for lessons learned—the good, the bad, and the ugly—for decades to come. I want to share with you some of the American Nurses Association's (ANA's) activities around the COVID-19 pandemic and the social justice movement, both of which significantly shaped this past year and will remain with us as we cross over to 2021.

Looking at our early efforts, ANA created COVID-19–related educational resources that we continue to update and share at nursingworld.org/coronavirus. Our first national, online survey assessing the availability of personal protective equipment (PPE) and nurses' other concerns yielded more than 32,000 responses, enabling us to begin addressing issues as quickly as possible. We advocated repeatedly for more PPE and clear infection control policies with the Administration and members of Congress, as well as through national media. Another 35,000-plus nurses have engaged with us through two subsequent PPE surveys, and our efforts won't cease until safe practices are in place.

ANA worked closely with our philanthropic arm, the American Nurses Foundation, which continues to reach out to nurses through online surveys. Responses to these periodic polls helped us develop critical services, including the Well-Being Initiative and financial education resources. I encourage you to participate in these surveys, which are vital sources of information that we can use to advocate with federal officials, bring attention to ongoing problems, and develop additional, relevant resources and strategies.

As part of the Tri-Council for Nursing, ANA aims to advance recommendations for practice, regulation, and education gleaned from the

pandemic and developed at a recent Tri-Council summit.

On another monumental issue, ANA stepped up our advocacy for social justice after acts of incomprehensible racism and police brutality. The deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, among so many others, sparked widespread protests, and nurses not only actively participated in these efforts but also provided urgent care to protesters.

Nurse representatives to our Membership Assembly—in no uncertain terms—called for opposing and addressing all forms of racism and discrimination, condemning brutality by law enforcement and all acts of violence, and ending health inequities that stem from systemic racism. These inequities also became glaringly apparent to all as COVID-19 ravaged many communities of color. As an initial step, ANA is convening a national steering commission to explore racism in nursing and create a national action plan to guide the profession. Again, we won't stop advocating for the rights of all.

In another major effort, ANA urged nurses to become politically engaged and informed and to vote. I hope that nurses' political advocacy continues because change can't happen without us. It's a message I frequently carry to nursing students, who will shape the future of our profession and healthcare.

This coming year, ANA will mark its 125th anniversary, and we will continue recognizing nurses—who persevere in the face of tremendous challenges—as part of our Year of the Nurse initiative.

Finally, let me share a quote from Nelson Mandela, a self-described optimist, that is so apt for this time in our history: "Part of being optimistic is keeping one's head pointed toward the sun, one's feet moving forward."

Let's all move forward together.



Ernest J. Grant, PhD, RN, FAAN
President, American Nurses Association

I hope that
nurses'
political
advocacy
continues
because
change can't
happen
without us.