



Chad Rittle

# Change for the better

ANA liaison to the ACIP has a lifelong commitment to public health.

“Nurses have a different viewpoint from that of physicians, pharmacists, and other specialties. We’re trained to look at the whole patient and not at any specific disease or condition.”

**CHAD RITTLE**, DNP, MPH, RN, FAAOHN, associate professor of nursing at Chatham University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, never thought he would be a nurse. After serving as an officer in the Navy, followed by a 20-year career in computer sales, he was looking for a career change. He attended nursing school while working as an air-quality environmental inspector for the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. He then merged his interests at the Pennsylvania Department of Health as a community health nurse, and later, as district epidemiology manager.

Rittle, a Pennsylvania State Nurses Association member, is the American Nurses Association (ANA) liaison representative to the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practice (ACIP) of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. ANA spoke to him about his experience on the committee, as well as lifelong learning and the importance of getting involved.

## What led to your interest in immunization and vaccination?

While I was district epidemiology manager at the Pennsylvania Department of Health, we had an outbreak of 70+ cases of pertussis at a middle school. At that time, I was searching for a doctoral project, and this outbreak looked like an interesting candidate.

After the outbreak, I coordinated a series of community immunization clinics to administer the Tdap booster to adolescents and adults in the area. Those efforts stopped the outbreaks.

It was through this experience that I recognized much more education and advocacy were needed to get all adults vaccinated.

## How were you selected for the ACIP?

In 2014, a peer told me there was an opening for an ANA liaison representative to the ACIP. Being able to represent nursing as well as Chatham University, while working with a federal agency, was a significant achievement.

My interest in vaccines and immunization over the years had prepared me to take ad-

vantage of this opportunity. Nurses should prepare themselves to take on roles like these. Getting selected isn’t a matter of luck. Do the homework, network, and be consistent with your professional development. This is how nurses can make their voices heard.

## What perspectives did you bring as a nurse to the committee, and what did you learn from other members?

Nurses have a different viewpoint from that of physicians, pharmacists, and other specialties. We’re trained to look at the whole patient and not at any specific disease or condition. Especially in occupational health, we want to assess how they developed their condition.

I’ve built strong relationships with an osteopath and a pharmacist on the committee. They have completely different perspectives than I do, and we’ve learned a lot from each other.

In the past, there were times when the interests of nurses weren’t always considered when evaluating proposals to address public health concerns. The ACIP wants all stakeholders to be represented to make the best public health policy.

## What is it like to be a part of this decision-making body?

One thing I learned quite early is how policy is made. Before I attended my first ACIP meeting, I was provided many documents describing the history of the ACIP, how they reviewed the literature on new vaccine developments, and their process of evaluating these new developments. Out of this process a recommendation is developed and only put to a vote after lengthy discussion.

My role is to help inform ANA and educate everyone, including my students and peers in the nursing profession, about the need for all adults to be fully vaccinated to help them live longer, healthier, and more productive lives.

AN

Interview by Elizabeth Moore, MFA, a writer at ANA.