



Angie Kurosaka

# Nephrology nurse leaders

## Rising to the pandemic's challenges

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AS THE COVID-19 pandemic has unfolded, healthcare workers worldwide have grappled with the ravaging effects of this novel infectious disease. When it became evident that the virus was attacking the kidneys, nephrology nurse leaders recognized the urgency in finding nurses who could provide dialysis and kidney care expertise.

Our knowledge about COVID-19's effect on the kidneys was sparse, but a recent study by Nugent and colleagues showed that acute kidney injury occurred in up to half of patients hospitalized with the illness. As calls for help from kidney organizations, state officials, and healthcare providers intensified, the American Nephrology Nurses Association (ANNA) responded by creating the COVID-19 Nurse Surge Support interactive map ([annanurse.org/covidhelp](http://annanurse.org/covidhelp)) in April 2020. The tool allows nephrology nurse leaders and providers to post calls for staff so that nurses across the country can respond to facilities' needs.

Nephrology nurse leaders have been providing this type of leadership behind the scenes for decades. During natural disasters or other times of heightened demand, nephrology nurses step up and intervene to provide life-saving care.

### Leaders, advocates, trailblazers

Nephrology nurses have been trailblazers on many topics of concern during the pandemic. For decades, we've worn full personal protective equipment while caring for patients. We also understand the importance of proper infection control and patient safety issues that have been a central focus during the pandemic. As nurse leaders, we remain strong advocates for patient and staff safety.

Being a nephrology nurse leader provides opportunities to learn and apply skills in a variety of settings, including hospital administration, home- and community-based services, higher education, government, companies that provide kidney-related products and services, and the pharmaceutical and insurance industries. Adapt-

ability, a dedication to continuous learning, and an acumen for business planning make nephrology nurse leaders effective in their roles.

On the advocacy front, ANNA strives for nurses' voices to be heard on healthcare policy. Our representatives have lobbied relentlessly in Washington, D.C., and at the state and local levels on measures that affect patients with kidney diseases, the nursing profession, and equitable healthcare for all Americans.

### Educating for the future

With the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention now estimating that about 15% of adults in the United States (approximately 37 million people) have chronic kidney disease, finding and retaining nurses to fill the growing demand for care is more important than ever. ANNA leads that effort by creating best-in-class educational content through multiple media outlets and by supporting members locally and nationally.

For decades, ANNA also has made it a top priority to provide the latest education and support for nephrology nurses and nephrology nurse leaders. We've created a library of leadership materials for novice, competent, or expert leaders. Members can access the toolkit at [annanurse.org/resources/members-only/leadership-toolkit](http://annanurse.org/resources/members-only/leadership-toolkit).

COVID-19 vaccines have given us hope to put this pandemic in the history books, learn from it, and prepare for future outbreaks. ANNA knows the importance of our life-saving work and will continue to advocate for nephrology nurses and our patients with visionary leadership, advocacy, and research.

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Angie Kurosaka is president-elect of ANNA, an organizational affiliate of the American Nurses Association.

### Reference

Nugent J, Aklilu A, Yamamoto Y, et al. Assessment of acute kidney injury and longitudinal kidney function after hospital discharge among patients with and without COVID-19. *JAMA Netw Open*. 2021;4(3):4:e211095. doi: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2021.1095