

ANA-Ohio Annual Conference Recap: A Celebration of Innovation, Advocacy, and Professional Growth

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The ANA-Ohio Annual Conference, held on September 19th and 20th, 2025, was a resounding success, bringing together nurses from across the state to address critical issues facing the nursing profession. Serving as a vital platform for professional development, networking, and advocacy, this year's conference was marked by a series of dynamic sessions, insightful keynotes, and rich discussions. The theme, "Celebrate, Collaborate, and Create," placed a special emphasis on "Create," encouraging attendees to reflect on the ever-evolving role of innovation, technology, and new opportunities in nursing practice.

Friday Evening: A Foundation for the Future

The conference kicked off on Friday evening with a memorable reception celebrating the soft launch of the ANA-Ohio Foundation. This landmark event was a significant moment for Ohio's nursing community, as the Foundation aims to advance the goals of professional development, advocacy, and research within nursing. A highlight of the evening was the announcement of a generous founding gift from Ella Kick, whose philanthropic support will help propel the Foundation's mission and initiatives.

Attendees were deeply moved by Ella Kick's personal reflections on her life's work and the purpose behind her substantial gift. The reception culminated in an inspiring keynote by Susan Wallace, titled "Heart Work: Purpose in Practice for Those Who Serve." Susan's words resonated powerfully with those in attendance as she explored the profound role that purpose plays in nursing. She emphasized the transformative power

of compassion and the importance of finding meaning in the work we do, despite the many challenges healthcare professionals face. Her insights offered a renewed sense of passion for nursing, motivating attendees to reconnect with their core purpose in patient care.

Saturday: A Day of Insight and Engagement

Saturday morning set the tone for an enriching day, beginning with the session "*Is Voting an Endangered Species?*" presented by Jeri Milstead, Carol Roe, Naomi House, Rebecca M. Patton, and Ruth Ludwick. This thought-provoking discussion explored the critical role that voting plays in shaping healthcare policy and underscored how nurses can use their voices to influence decisions at the local, state, and national levels.

Following this, Colleen O'Leary delivered a powerful session on "*Evidence-Based Practice Made Real*," providing attendees with actionable strategies for implementing evidence-based practices in nursing to enhance patient care and outcomes.

The day continued with a keynote presentation from Olivia Lemberger, PhD, RN, NPD-BC, the American Nurses Association Innovation Scientist. Olivia's talk, "*Companionship Towards Creativity: The Emerging Future of Innovative Ecosystems*," highlighted the increasing role of nurses in healthcare innovation. She provided a compelling history of nursing's contributions to healthcare innovation, while emphasizing how nurses are uniquely positioned to lead the development of creative solutions in the evolving healthcare landscape.

Poster Presentations and Exhibitor Visits

After the keynote, attendees had the opportunity to explore nearly 40 innovative poster presentations that showcased the cutting-edge research and ideas being generated by nurses and nursing students across Ohio. This session reflected the wealth of creativity and scholarship within the nursing community. Special thanks were given to the exhibitors, including STORM, Jackson Nurse Professionals, and Western Governors University, whose support helped make the conference possible.

Afternoon Sessions: Continuing the Learning Journey

In the afternoon, the conference featured more thought-provoking sessions. "*Sharing Your Expertise Through Writing for Publication*," led by Yvonne Smith, Barbara Brunt, and Andrea DeSapri, focused on the importance of nurses sharing their knowledge through academic publishing. This session encouraged attendees to consider how writing for publication can amplify their voice within the profession.

Another session, "*Creating a Culture of Care: The Journey of Implementing Code Lavender for Staff Support*," presented by Rachel Cooke and Stephanie Calmes, examined how healthcare organizations can implement programs to support staff wellbeing. Their discussion on Code Lavender, a program designed to provide emotional support to healthcare workers, highlighted the growing need to create nurturing environments for those who care for others.

Closing Remarks: Business, Raffles, and Recognition

The conference concluded with ANA-OHIO's Annual Business Meeting, where members gathered to discuss the organization's goals and future initiatives. During the meeting, new members of the Board of Directors were inducted, marking an exciting new chapter for the organization. The day wrapped up with exciting raffle giveaways, made possible

by the generous contributions of sponsors such as CeraVe, First Federal Savings of Lorain, and Spitzer Law Offices.

Acknowledgments

A heartfelt thank you goes out to all the speakers, exhibitors, and attendees who made this year's conference such a success. Special thanks to our generous sponsors and exhibitors for their continued support, and to the ANA-OHIO

team for their dedication in organizing a conference that was both dynamic and impactful.

As we reflect on this year's theme, *Celebrate, Collaborate, and Create*, we look forward to the future of nursing in Ohio, energized by the innovations, connections, and ideas shared throughout the event. ■

The Critical Role DNP Preparation Serves in Advancing Population Health

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Nurses have long played vital roles in addressing the nation's health challenges. With growing attention to health disparities, DNP programs offer preparation for nurses to advance as clinical experts, become nurse leaders, and equip them to improve population health. Graduates use systems thinking, evidence-based practice, and equity to meet individual patient care needs and beyond to make meaningful changes in communities and for population health. By cultivating both clinical and academic leaders, DNP programs serve a dual purpose: to further prepare advanced clinical experts and to create a workforce of nurse educators who teach and mentor the next generation. This approach fosters a sustainable impact on population health improvement across healthcare and educational institutions alike.

Embedding Population Health in DNP Curricula

To effectively prepare DNP graduates to influence individual and population health, programs are embedding social determinants of health and leadership

principles throughout their curricula. Students are asked to analyze structural inequalities from access to care to the quality and health outcomes of individuals and populations. Through the use of evidence-based practice and quality improvement, interventions can be identified and developed, then applied to address access, equity, and health outcomes in communities. Utilizing frameworks such as Healthy People 2030, which aims to eliminate health disparities across the United States (US) (Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion [ODPHP], 2020), and integration of advanced practice competencies, prepares graduates to lead initiatives to address complex health challenges at the top of their practice standards.

Furthermore, online programs expand the reach of nurses serving across the US including underserved communities in rural, racially and ethnically diverse, and economically challenged settings (Rideout, 2025). The flexible environment that online programs leverage allows students to stay embedded and practicing in these communities while gaining

exposure to national health priorities, resources, and learning from faculty and peers which further adds enrichment in experiences and backgrounds (McCutcheon et al., 2015). Collaborations between health systems, public health entities, and universities further expand opportunities and the scope for students to undertake diverse practicum and project experiences (West et al., 2013).

Diversity as a Strategy to Improve Population Health

A necessary approach to advancing health equity begins with nurses who proportionately reflect the populations that they serve. Diversifying the student body also helps diversify the healthcare workforce and improve population health, both national goals (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine [NASEM], 2021; National League for Nursing [NLN], 2023). Therefore, population health and leadership-based DNP programs focus highly on recruitment and retention of students from historically underserved, marginalized, racially or ethnically diverse,