Advocating for Our Communities – A Public Health Nurse's Concerns

Deborah Hogan, MPH, BSN, RN, Chair, FNA Public Health Special Interest Group

There are so many issues affecting the health of our communities today, and many federal resources to address these needs have been reduced or eliminated. As patient and community advocates, nurses are an important voice for raising concerns.

Monitoring Emerging Infectious Diseases

Infectious diseases are a constant threat to public health. We now know what pandemic disease can do to our world. It is critical to monitor Bird Flu which has spread from birds to many other animal species including cows. Cases have been reported in humans caring for the herds. Research for a possible vaccine is essential, but funding is threatened as is the funding for continued monitoring of other dangerous diseases. Monitoring is important in pandemic prevention.

Resurgence of Vaccine-Preventable Diseases

Unfortunately, due to misinformation circulating on social media, even vaccine-preventable diseases are now resurging. According to CDC data, there have been more Measles cases in 2025 than in any year since Measles was declared eliminated in 2000! Be assured that there is a safe and effective vaccine (MMR) for preventing Measles, Mumps and Rubella, which is recommended for children at age12-15 months followed by a second dose at 4-6 years. Families need to be encouraged to trust the long-standing science and the protection that childhood vaccines, as well as COVID and Flu vaccines offer.

Protecting Medicaid and Access to Care

Medicaid coverage is an essential public health resource that provides health care for 20% of our population, including women, pregnant mothers, children, adults with chronic illnesses and nursing home care. It is under attack by recent legislation and it's estimated by the Congressional Budget Office that over 8.6 million people will lose coverage. The loss of this medical coverage could lead to hospital closures, especially in rural areas, and result in layoffs for healthcare workers, including nurses. Both patients and providers will be significantly impacted.

Disaster Preparedness and Response

Preparedness and safety are also a concern. We know that environmental changes impact the severity of hurricanes and rainfall events. We depend on local resources as well as Federal assistance like FEMA to respond when storms ravage communities. Many of us have experienced these occurrences and are aware of the amount of response needed. Unfortunately, FEMA has suffered cutbacks which impact response, as we saw in the Texas floods. What will happen with future events?

How Nurses Can Take Action

What can we, as nurse advocates, do? First, educate our legislators (local, state and national) about our concerns. Even though the bill has passed, or cuts have been made, we need to advocate for those impacted as well as safety and preparedness concerns. When possible, VOTE for those you trust will advocate for protections as well.

Also, stay informed. Seek out reputable sources like ANA, FNA, NFID (National Foundation for Infectious Diseases), CIDRAP (Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy) at the University of Minnesota, WastewaterSCAN Dashboard from Stanford and Emory and the Nursing Action Coalition of Florida as well as your own trusted resources.

Nursing advocacy is more essential than ever. Our families and communities depend on us for our expertise and caring as well as our advocacy now more than ever!

If you're interested in Public Health, we encourage you to join us for our monthly special interest group calls on the fourth Thursday of every month at 7pm ET (6pm CT). More details can be found on the FNA events calendar at www.floridanurse.org/events. ■