

## EDITORIAL

# Celebrating the Power of Nurses

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Each May, we pause to recognize our profession and celebrate nurses around the world. The American Nurses Association (ANA) theme for Nurses' Week 2026 is The Power of Nurses™. This theme celebrates nurses' leadership and impact on healthcare, recognizing the invaluable contributions nurses make in the lives of others; while addressing the challenges they face every day (ANA, 2026). The International Council of Nurses (ICN) acclaims nurses on May 12, each year, designating the anniversary of the birth of Florence Nightingale as International Nurses Day. International Nurses Day is a global celebration that acknowledges the commitment and bravery of nurses around the world. The theme for International Nurses Day 2026 is "Our Nurses. Our Future. Empowered Nurses Save Lives" (ICN, 2026). In addition to recognizing the contributions of ANA-Ohio members and committees, this issue will focus on nursing leadership, impact, and economic value.

## Nursing Leadership

All nurses are leaders in healthcare, regardless of their position or authority. Leaders advocate for, inspire, and influence others to achieve their maximum potential (ANA, 2023b). A nurse leader combines nursing knowledge and expertise with business and leadership skills developed through ongoing professional development. According to ANA (2023b), critical skills for effective leadership include:

- Communication and Collaboration, leading to a sense of shared decision-making and working together toward common goals;
- Education and Quality of Practice, focusing on continued professional development to support evidence-based practice;

- Environmental Health and Resource Utilization, ensuring that patient care is provided in a safe and healthy environment and promotes wellness of all health care staff;
- Ethics and Professional Practice Evaluation, modeling ethical practices to guide decisions, displaying honesty by being accountable, and evaluating adherence to professional practice standards; and
- Professionalism and Leadership, building relationships and collaborating with team members, as well as using critical thinking skills to analyze decisions impacting patients or the organization (ANA, 2023b).

Compassion and empathy are also important attributes. They help nurse leaders foster meaningful and effective interpersonal relationships (ANA, 2023b).

Nursing leadership is the driving force to bring followers together to achieve established goals (Jiang, 2024). Nursing leaders are key drivers in interdisciplinary collaboration and integration of resources to provide healthcare services to patients and families. Jiang (2024) identified four key traits of leadership (motivation, intense desire, integrity, and self-confidence) and postulated that developing leadership skills boosts nurses' sense of accomplishment and self-worth. Nurses who cultivate the leadership skills outlined in Jiang's editorial are well prepared to address the complex challenges of today's health care environment.

## Impact

One way that nurses can have an impact is by improving health care access and quality. The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine addressed the role of nurses in improving health care access and

quality in the *Future of Nursing 2020-2030 Report* (2021). The report concluded that nurses can be key contributors to achieving health equity by taking on expanded roles, being innovative, and partnering with communities and other sectors. To achieve this goal, nurses must be able to work to the full extent of their education and training (National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine, 2021).

The United States spends more than \$5.3 trillion per year on health care (Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, 2026), 25 percent more per capita than the next highest-spending country, and underperforms on nearly every metric (Emanuel et al., 2020). Life expectancy, infant mortality, and maternal mortality are all worse in the United States than most developed countries. Disparities in health care access and outcomes are seen across racial lines. Race, ethnicity, income, gender, and geographic location all play substantial roles in a person's ability to access high-quality, equitable, and affordable health care. Addressing these complex and intersecting factors requires action at the primary care level.

In primary care, registered nurses can:

- engage patients with chronic conditions in behavior change and adjust medications according to provider-written protocols;
- lead teams to improve the care and reduce the cost of high-need, high-cost patients;
- coordinate the care of chronically ill patients between the primary care home and the surrounding healthcare neighborhood; and
- promote population health, including working with communities to create healthier spaces for people to live, work,

learn, and play (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2021).

Other ways that nurses can increase access for populations with complex health care needs are through Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), retail clinics, home health services, telehealth, school nursing, and care management. By delivering care in these diverse and community-based settings, nurses can reduce barriers to the social determinants of health, such as transportation challenges, cost, and limited provider availability, thereby improving continuity of care and health outcomes. Guidance from nursing leadership to make policies that impact access reinforces the importance of these efforts and highlights additional strategies for optimizing patient outcomes. ANA (2023a) identified best practices that nurses can use to promote positive patient outcomes. These include understanding and implementing patient-centered care, collaborating with patients, improving patient access, providing emotional support, building a solid team culture, promoting evidence-based practices, and communicating with clarity and compassion.

## Economic Power

According to ICN (2024), investments that increase the productivity of the health workforce yield substantial benefits, including improved health outcomes, economic growth, job creation, and productive gains in other sectors. In low- and middle-income countries, the return on investment in the health care workforce is about 10 to 1. Despite these benefits, nearly half of the world's population—about 4.5 billion people—lacks coverage for essential health services. As countries strive to improve their health care systems, strategically investing in nursing is critical to achieve sustainable growth and system resilience provides a reason to celebrate.

The ICN recommends several strategies to support this goal, including:

- creating stable and well-compensated nursing jobs to alleviate poverty and

address gender equality in the global workforce;

- prioritizing investments to enable people to work to their full scope of practice, including Advanced Practice Registered Nurses, to improve health system efficiency and effectiveness;
- ensuring the safety of nurses for sustainable and resilient health systems; and
- investing in safe care to reduce costs and prevent harm (ICN, 2024).

If considerable progress is made on the ICN call to action, that would be a reason to celebrate.

## Celebrating ANA-Ohio Member's Achievements

The mission of ANA-Ohio states the organization is "Dedicated to empowering nurses to achieve excellence." (ANA-Ohio, 2025). This issue of the *ANA-Ohio News Journal* includes reports from committees and Special Interest Groups (SIGs), highlighting their members, accomplishments, and goals for 2026. Additionally, it recognizes ANA-Ohio members who received awards in 2025. The individuals featured here are contributing to excellence in nursing practice and readers are encouraged to acknowledge their achievements.

This article has outlined various ways to celebrate the power of nurses. Think about what you can do in your role to promote the power of nurses and celebrate the many ways we impact health care. ■

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