

The speakers emphasized that voting is a social determinant of health. Civic participation is associated with better self-reported health outcomes, and communities with reduced access to voting often experience poorer health outcomes and greater health disparities. The speakers indicated that barriers to voting include hospitalization during elections, limited mobility, lack of awareness of absentee voting options, complex and changing voting rules, and time-sensitive deadlines. Voting requirements and considerations for individuals who are hospitalized or residing in long-term care facilities were also discussed.

Erin Keels, DNP, APRN-CNP, President of the Ohio Board of Nursing, and Jack Brubaker, Legislative Liaison at the Ohio Board of Nursing (OBN), provided updates on several key initiatives and developments. These included highlights from the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) 2024 National Workforce Survey, findings from the Ohio Workforce Survey, updates to the NCLEX, and recent legislative activity impacting nursing practice in Ohio.

Tiffany Bukoffsky concluded the summit by announcing the launch of a dedicated workspace for organizational leaders on the ANA-Ohio website. All

association leadership participants have been granted access, and attendees should have received an email with login instructions and details. The workspace serves as a central hub for collaboration and resource sharing, featuring discussion boards, shared files contributed by association members, and a record of workspace activity. A directory of summit attendees is also available to support ongoing communication and connection among participants. ■

References online:
myamericannurse.com/?p=426707

Enhancing Our Practice by Advancing One Another

Contributing Author: Andrea DeSapri, MSN, RN, MEDSURG-BC, NPD-BC

There are a multitude of approaches to enhancing nursing practice especially through the lens of evidence-based practice, quality improvement, and nursing research. From the perspective of a Nursing Professional Development Specialist who supports the onboarding and ongoing professional development of nurses, enhancing our practice frequently focuses on retention initiatives to build strength and experience within our healthcare teams. Enhancing our practice means establishing strong, collaborative, and respectful relationships with our peers and uplifting them through partnership. Peer mentorship programs, regardless of role, tenure, location, or experience level, help to ensure that we are advancing each other as well as the science behind our practice.

Throughout the literature, there are numerous examples and insights as to how mentorship programs can benefit participants, both mentors and mentees alike. Sheppard-Law et al. (2018),

discuss a novice clinical nurse educator mentorship program in which participants, “transformed their clinical practice through an increase in knowledge, skills, and understanding of evidence-based practice. Such skills included participants being able to critique the literature and to feel confident to implement change in their clinical setting” (p. 212). Utilizing collaborative, reciprocal frameworks to structure mentorship programs can increase the confidence of both parties and support the mutual professional development of mentors and mentees through the exchange of knowledge, ideas, and clinical experiences (Jacobson & Sherrod, 2012). When combined with the advances of evidence and research, empowering others via mentorship can do wonders to ensure that best practices are implemented consistently and confidently at the bedside.

It is impossible to sustain, enhance, and advance the practice of nursing if retention is not prioritized, permitting the

development of skills, knowledge, and confidence in members of the workforce. This transcends the practice setting and applies to academia as well. Summers (2017) reviews the importance of mentorship regarding retention as applicable to nursing faculty: “...programs with formal mentor support, clear direction about role expectation, and the opportunity to observe effective teaching with ongoing feedback on performance for new educators, are essential if academic organizations want to retain competent and effective nursing faculty” (p. 265). If mentorship programs are not active to support retention, they absolutely should be considered as these partnerships have the potential to create profound change, improve nurse satisfaction, and ultimately lead to a more confident, competent, and content workforce.

“Mentorship can create an environment for continuous improvement, self-discovery, attainable goals, improved job and career satisfaction, and

enhanced leadership skills" (Robertson & Ferguson, 2024, p. 28). The enhancement of leadership skills regardless of position title, encouragement and collaboration gained from strengthening peer relationships, and personal and professional development acquired from mentorship programming all support nursing retention and role satisfaction.

Implementing programs that focus on retention, such as peer mentorship, can strengthen the application and sustainability of research-driven initiatives and EBP, resulting in improved learning and working environments, positive patient outcomes, and a more engaged workforce. The establishment of peer mentor programs regardless of role or setting has

the power to enhance our practice and advance our peers, our profession, and the power of nursing. ■

References online:
myamericannurse.com/?p=426709

Transition to Practice: Cultivating Curiosity and Caring

Contributing Author: Ruth A. Leeds, MS, MSN, RN, NPD-BC, CMSRN

It was an average day on the medical surgical unit that changed the trajectory of my nursing career. I was working alongside a novice nurse who walked out of a room and asked, "Can anyone help me with an IV?" I offered to help, promptly initiated the IV, and circled back to notify my coworker. My quiet satisfaction in helping was met with tears. As I spoke to her, she voiced her fears: "I am never going to be good enough." I tried to reassure her that she was okay and she would get there, but it took time. She dried her tears, and the day continued.

Within a few months, that nurse left her job. Sadly, within the year, she left nursing altogether. It was devastating because she was going to be a great nurse. The nursing profession lost a potentially great nurse because she lacked confidence and we did not adequately support her. I grappled with what I could have done differently. How could we prevent the loss of future nurse colleagues? This experience led me to become a Nursing Professional Development Specialist and a leader in transition-to-practice (TTP) programs.

We all have a role to play in bridging the gap between students and professional nurses. Whether starting a first job or moving into a new clinical setting, it is important for new nurses to feel

supported (Kiger et al., 2023; Knighten & Yvanovich, 2023). Despite TTP programs being designed to help new nurses build skills to succeed, first-year turnover rates remain high at 31% (Nursing Solutions Inc., 2026). Gaps in critical thinking can make the transition to practice overwhelming, affecting confidence, competence, and ultimately retention.

TTP programs alone cannot lower new nurse turnover without a healthy work environment and leader support. Nurse leaders, nurse educators, and nursing colleagues are essential to closing the academic practice gap and fostering a smooth transition to practice. New nurses must be encouraged to actively participate in their own learning. By cultivating a spirit of inquiry and professional curiosity, we can create a safe place for new nurses to learn and grow.

What is Professional Curiosity

Professional curiosity involves creativity, empathy, and proactively seeking information to improve decision-making and patient outcomes (Taheri et al., 2024). It supports critical thinking and clinical decisions to provide safe patient care (Hendecki, 2025; Zainal et al., 2025). Curiosity is an essential communication skill in which the nurse actively listens, engages in meaningful dialogue, and

empowers the patient to participate in their care (Timmermann et al., 2026). Professional curiosity and critical thinking are linked to new nurses' confidence and competence.

Leaders Promoting Professional Curiosity

Nurse leaders create a safe environment where new nurses can develop a strong learning mindset. By supporting continuous learning and promoting a culture of knowledge sharing, leaders help new nurses thrive. Nurses in leadership positions, particularly those in nurse educator or preceptor roles, have a unique opportunity to foster professional curiosity. Investing in preceptor development is key to preparing supportive mentors who guide novice nurses with confidence, encouragement, and a clear path through their transition to practice. Additionally, nurse educators create a curriculum for novice nurses to develop critical thinking and communication skills.

The Preceptor's Role

Preceptors play a central role in fostering a caring environment where constructive feedback reflects a genuine commitment to each nurse's success. This feedback conveys that the preceptor cares and is invested in the preceptee. Preceptors en-