I recently read an article that stated, “… meaningful belonging leads to shared beliefs and collaborative behaviors” (Hurt, 2018, para. 5). I believe the evidence supports this statement. While individuals certainly can work together to accomplish a set of objectives, a truly lasting and collaborative relationship begins with a sense of community – of belonging. It requires a shared purpose and sense of values. This is true in the practice setting as well as with professional organizations. Members may be aware of many of the benefits belonging to an organization may offer, but unless a member has a sense of belonging, of shared values and opportunities to collaborate, the membership may not be meaningful for the member.

Last year, as the Board of Directors began work on AMSN’s strategic plan, we also looked at our mission, vision, and core values. After much contemplation and discussion, the board determined four guiding principles best described the work of AMSN and the characteristics of its members. I would like to share these with you in this President’s Message.

AMSN, its members, volunteers, and staff are guided by the following core values.

Dedication

*We are passionately devoted to the well-being of medical-surgical nurses and those under their care.*

Medical-surgical nurses are dedicated to their practice setting, colleagues, and the welfare of their patients. AMSN members demonstrate their passion and dedication in their committee work within their practice setting and for AMSN, their commitment to lifelong learning, and the sharing and networking among members within their chapters, on the HUB, and at convention. AMSN volunteers are an integral part of our journal MEDSURG Nursing and newsletter MedSurg Matters; of discussions and answers to questions posted on the HUB; as advocates for nurses and patients in the legislative sector; as reviewers for PRISM Award applications recognizing exemplary medical-surgical units; as faculty members teaching certification review courses; and so many more areas that provide benefits to fellow members and the nursing community at large. The dedication and service of our members enhances the membership experience and sense of belonging for all of us.

Transformation

*We lead innovation in all aspects of medical-surgical nursing.*

Medical-surgical nurses are on the cutting edge of care delivery and coordination. Our members participate in focus groups at convention to improve medical products and care delivery systems. Other members have started their own businesses after identifying a need and effectively transforming their own practice.

AMSN is seeking innovative ways to transform members’ experience as well as their professional practice. We currently are involved in research investigating the characteristics of PRISM units and of leadership practices of medical-surgical nurses at the point of care. Information from these studies will help with the development of new services and educational offerings for our members. We also are developing interactive learning modules focusing on the care of patients on medical-surgical units who have behavioral health needs.

The landscape and scope of practice for nurses is evolving constantly as a result of national and global issues, such as the rising costs of health care, new technologies, immigration, the economy, and conflict (World Health Organization, 2016). Addressing these challenges requires ongoing development of clinical skills, critical thinking, role performance, adaptation to change, and in many cases, innovation by the nurse (Rasmussen, Henderson, Andrew, & Conroy, 2018). These challenges also can leave a nurse feeling isolated and somewhat adrift amid the healthcare system chaos, causing increased stress (Dahl & Clancy, 2015; Leong & Crossman, 2015).

Professional organizations such as AMSN can help nurses meet these challenges, impacting care delivery and coordination. Belonging to and actively participating in the organization provide a sense of community and shared purpose. AMSN members have a variety of opportunities for engagement, including professional development at chapter meetings or convention, networking in person and on the HUB, and volunteerism in one of many task forces and committees; all of these increase the sense of belonging (Leong & Crossman, 2015; Zarshenas et al., 2014) with...
a potential added benefit of increased satisfaction in the workplace (Seo & Kim, 2017). They also decrease the risk of burnout.

**Collaboration**

*We actively seek to engage with members of the interdisciplinary team, other nursing specialties, and external stakeholders to achieve common goals that reflect and promote our strategic goals and values.*

Medical-surgical nurses work with interdisciplinary members of the healthcare team everyday, coordinating the care and advocating on behalf of their patients. “At any moment, a med-surg nurse is juggling care for several patients – administering medications, educating families, discharging patients and admitting new ones, all while keeping the entire health care team on the same page... They are the health care professionals who are coordinating care for patients 24/7” (Academy of Medical-Surgical Nurses, 2017). This work between members of the healthcare team enhances patient care and promotes effective care delivery. It involves understanding team members’ roles and responsibilities as well as engaging in effective communication and teamwork (Raparla, Davis, Shumaker, Kumar, & Hafiz, 2017).

AMSN is engaged with other nursing specialties to provide additional benefits to our members. We currently are working with the Association for Radiologic and Imaging Nursing to provide pre- and post-procedure education for medical-surgical nurses caring for patients undergoing radiologic procedures. We have collaborated with the American Academy of Ambulatory Care Nursing to develop a handoff communication tool. The Medical-Surgical Nursing Certification Board also has collaborated with this organization to develop a certification examination for Care Coordination and Transition Management (CCCTM®). The Board of Directors and management team also work closely with external stakeholders to provide education to members and inform stakeholders about practice issues and changes.

**Advocacy**

*We are courageous and proactive in advocating for medical-surgical nurses and patients, from the point of care to the boardroom and, from the payor to the legislative arena.*

Medical-surgical nurses work to maintain quality and safety of patients and members of the healthcare team by participating in unit-based councils and policy committees. Part of this work is focused on developing systems that allow nurses to work to the full extent of their licensure and support their skills to practice using scientific evidence, critical thinking, and clinical judgment (Donnelly & Domm, 2014). Medical-surgical nurses also advocate for our patients through the development and nurturing of the nurse-patient relationship and in our support of patient autonomy.

AMSN has an ongoing commitment to remain aware and proactive in the face of looming changes in the healthcare environment. AMSN’s legislative team monitors activity at the state and national levels for anything that might impact medical-surgical nurses and their practice. We have been vocal in advocating for adequate staffing at state and national levels, recently providing information to members living in Massachusetts when a staffing bill was proposed in the state legislative.

Advocacy also encompasses a duty to support and promote research and evidence-based practice projects, and provide opportunities for professional development. AMSN provides grants for research and evidence-based practice projects. Research projects are promoted on social media platforms and results are disseminated in our publications as well as at convention through podium and poster presentations.

AMSN encourages members to participate in research and evidence-based practices. If you have a study or evidence-based practice project, please share it with your AMSN colleagues by sending an abstract for podium or poster presentation at convention, or writing an article for publication in our journal or newsletter. You also can share your project and findings with colleagues on the HUB. If you need funding for a project, consider submitting an application to AMSN; your member benefits include access to grants and scholarships.

**An Imperative**

I became involved at the national level shortly after joining AMSN, first as a member of the newsletter editorial team and the legislative coordinator and later as a board member. The decision to volunteer for that first committee has changed my entire professional life and I have benefitted from so many more opportunities than I ever could have imagined or experienced otherwise. Even in the most difficult time of my nursing career, I felt a sense of belonging to something bigger as a member of AMSN. With a shared sense of values, I always know I do not stand alone. My voice combines with the voices of other medical-surgical nurses to address the challenges we face and forge our future together.

Jim D’Alfonso, MSN, RN, NEA-BC, Executive Director of Kaiser Permanente Nurse Scholars Academy, recently noted, “Things change at such a fast pace, whether it’s technology or techniques or nursing practice, that belonging to an association is more of an imperative than an option” (Cuff, 2018, p. 14). While D’Alfonso may have been referring to the importance of membership in a professional nursing organization, it’s also true that in today’s healthcare landscape, membership in an organization where you also feel a sense of belonging is equally important. **AMSN**

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REFERENCES


