

Two RN-AIM Nursing Leaders Die

RN-AIM lost two dedicated nursing leaders in late December and early January. Both will be greatly missed by colleagues and friends.

Roberta Abrams was a long time member of RN-AIM from the Detroit Region. She was active in COMON, and the Metro Detroit Chapter of AWHONN. She was devoted to maternal and child health care, an advocate for patients and the profession, and contributed numerous editorial and article to journals and newspapers. A friend describes her as having her finger on the pulse of what was happening in the world, the state, and federal legislatures, and providing a strong voice for women and children. She practiced at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit and died of cancer in December 2009.

Mary Jo Arndt, an Associate Professor of Nursing at Michigan State University, died of ovarian cancer on January 2, 2010. She was a member of RN-AIM, Lansing Region, and Director of Undergraduate Programs, MSU College of Nursing, where she had been a member of the faculty for 16 years. She taught pediatric nursing at several universities over her long career, and was active in MNRS, serving as the chair of numerous research interest groups. Her research interest was in nursing theory. Following her initial diagnosis, she found some great wigs that she decided she liked better than her own hair and wore them even before her cancer recurred.

Public Act 216 of 2009 Signed into Law

On January 4, 2010, enrolled House Bill 5593 went into immediate effect. It establishes the Nurse Professional Fund within the State Treasury. It mandates that the state treasurer shall credit \$8.00 of each individual annual license fee collected to the Nurse Professional fund which must be used to:

- Promote safe patient care in all nursing practice environments;
- Advance the safe practice of the nursing profession;
- Assure a continuous supply of high-quality direct-care nurses, nursing faculty, and nursing education programs; and
- Operate a nursing scholarship program.

The legislation also sets out fees for license application, per year license fees, temporary and limited licenses, and specialty certification fees. The White Paper developed by the Public Policy Council of RN-AIM was instrumental in defining the role of the Chief Nurse Executive, and the continuing needs for development of nursing programs and faculty in the activities outlined in the legislation

COMON was very active in support of this legislation, and several members testified in favor of its passage. COMON's Executive Committee sent a letter to Representative Alma Wheeler-Smith, who introduced the legislation and Senator Mike Bishop in support of the bill. You can view this legislation on line by visiting www.michigan.gov/legislature, under House Bill 5593.

Remember to check out the RN-AIM website regularly: www.RN-AIM.org

If you have comments and/or pertinent announcements to post there, please forward to: Nurse@RN-AIM.org

Newly Licensed Registered Nurses Speak Out

An article published in the July/August 2009 issue of Nursing Outlook by Pellico, Brewer and Kovner discusses the responses of 600 newly licensed registered nurses regarding their first experiences as professionals. Since many new nurses leave their initial place of employment, the authors sought to determine the reasons for dissatisfaction that precedes such a decision. Five major themes were revealed by the analysis of the survey content gathered from the newly licensed nurses, including:

- Colliding expectations, which meant inconsistencies between what participants were taught in nursing school and actual clinical practice
- Requirement to be up to speed on the job from day one
- Too much is expected of them
- Mistreatment including verbal abuse from physicians and colleagues
- Hope for the future.

The authors conclude that given the responses of the new nurses, reforms in the working environments where nurses begin practice need to be addressed.

That theme was also addressed during two presentations at the IPN Conference in Ann Arbor in mid-December. Several of the younger, more recently graduated nurses indicated that they had been treated poorly by older colleagues rather than experiencing the mentoring relationships they hoped for from more seasoned and experienced nurses.

On the NSO website, an article titled "Bridges Across Time" explores similar concerns, focused on the intergenerational differences among nurses from four generational groups, and this was also discussed at the IPN Conference. How we interact with each other as professionals is crucial in the provision of care, and the major concerns of the various generations currently practicing nursing often clash.

CONSUMER INDEX FINDINGS

The Health Care Consumer Confidence Index continues to fluctuate as the discussions regarding the health care bill proceed. The rating for December was 99.1 points, up from 96.9 points in November, but lower than the 104.6 points earlier in the fall of 2009. A third of all respondents indicated concern about losing their health coverage, a slight increase from November. Slightly over 42% reported being concerned about their ability to pay for routine care, down two points from November. Nearly a third of respondents reported believing that their personal finances would be worse if health reform passed, an increase of 6 point since November. Finally, a full 33.1% believe that their access to care under a reformed health care system would be worse, and increase of nearly 9 points since November.

It appears that the longer health care reform drags on, that less the likelihood of accomplishing the positive portions of the bill which preclude insurance companies from denying coverage based on pre-existing conditions, increasing the numbers of individuals with coverage, any form of public option for uninsured individuals. My personal concern is that we are also missing an opportunity for tort reform, which would decrease the number of lawsuits that are essentially without merit, but currently add huge costs to health care overall due to liability concerns.



Do Kids Really Count?

The newest Kids Count in Michigan report identifies alarming statistics related to child poverty, abuse and neglect and teen births. Childhood poverty rose by 6% between 2005 and 2007, with nearly one in every five children in Michigan living in poverty. The number of children receiving free or reduced lunches rose 14% between 2006 and 2008, and more than 2 in every five children now participate in the School Lunch Program.

Confirmed victims of abuse or neglect rose an alarming 16% between 2000 and 2008, and nearly 30,000 children were found to have been abused or neglected in 2008. There were some positive trends, with childhood deaths dropping 18%, teen deaths fell by 11% and infant mortality declined 4% between 2000 and 2007. Rural counties seemed to fare worse than urban ones, with higher rates of child poverty and higher participation in Medicaid. Midsized and rural counties also had much higher rates of abuse and neglect than urban areas, and urban counties had significantly higher rates of low birthweight babies.

The largest improvements were in education, where the percentage of students considered proficient in math improved dramatically between 2003 and 2008, but achievement of Michigan students in math remained flat compared to the rest of the nation. Dropout rates also declined by 6% between 2007 and 2008. The work that Michigan is presently doing to compete for federal funds in excess of 4 million "Race to the Top" dollars, should assist in supporting students to remain in school. One troubling omission in the current Kids Count report is that since many juvenile delinquents are now housed in county rather than state facilities, there is no uniform collection of data about this population, and we have little information about how this population is being managed in the various Michigan counties.

Giving Nurses a Bigger Role in Improving Health Care

The President and CEO of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Risa Lavisso-Mourey, MD, MBA, is speaking out in favor of nurses sharing a larger role in the provision of health care and improving health care. She describes nurses as skilled health providers sympathetic caregivers, trusted dispenser of medicines and treatments, capable interpreter of complicated medical instructions, coordinators of care and experts in triage. She further states that nurses are in a unique position to assist in the reduction of medical errors, increasing access to health care for needy populations, managing and improving comprehensive coordination of care and share important methods of cost containment.

Numerous polls have shown that nursing is either the most trusted or among the most trusted group of professional in the country. In partnership with Gallup polling, an opinion survey found that across the board, academics, business leaders in the health industry and elsewhere that our country is not taking advantage of all that nurses have to offer in terms of leadership, innovation and reform. Those surveyed found this to be a waste of a valuable resource. These same leaders said they would like to see nurses have more influence in reducing medical errors and improving patient safety (90%), improving quality of care (89%), promoting wellness and expanding preventive care (86%), improving health care efficiency and reducing costs (84%), coordinating care through the health care system (83%), helping the health care system to adapt to an aging population (83%) and increasing access to health care (74%). Read the whole article at www.rwjf.org, [Giving Nurses a Bigger Role in Improving Health Care](http://www.rwjf.org), 1/23/2010.

Websites to Visit and Conferences to Attend

Visit www.rwjf.org/advances to learn about nursing programs and research on obesity, the effects of childhood poverty, health inequities in communities of color, projects for improving quality of care and other topics of interest.

Keep Michigan Health Council's address www.mhc.org on your "websites to visit" list as well to learn what is happening at the Michigan Center for Nursing, and check out the Spring Institute of Nursing Excellence to be held at Crystal Mountain Resort and Spa, March 21-24, 2010. The Institute is designed to reward excellent direct-care nurses, encourage them to remain in the profession, increase their capacity for leadership, enhance their ability as role models and enhance their abilities to attract others into the nursing profession.

An international conference on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders will be held Friday and Saturday, April 9-10, 2010 at the Kewadin Casino Hotel and Convention Center in Sault Ste Marie. Featured speakers are from San Diego State University and the University of Wisconsin, Department of Family Medicine. The focus of the conference is the identification of a framework for identifying, diagnosing and treating individuals and families affected by FASD.

On Friday, February 26, 2010, a conference sponsored by Spectrum Health Healthier Communities, 655 Seward Avenue N.W., Grand Rapids will present "Perinatal Mood Disorders." The focus of the presentation by Nancy Roberts will include differentiating among the six recognized perinatal mood disorders, the risk factors and treatment options for the disorders as well as the screening measures and resources available for women experiencing perinatal mood disorders. There is no fee for this presentation and CEUs will be provided.

And the Musing...

What do you, as an experienced nurse do to support those who will follow you in the profession? I have been thinking a lot about that since the IPN conference, and the discussion of intergenerational differences and how they influence what we think and feel about colleagues of all levels of experience and competence. The Nursing Outlook article referenced above should give us pause...

Do we treat all of our colleagues with respect?

Do we provide mentorship to the newly registered nurse?

Do we guide those with less skill and experience?

Or do we cite the differences in how individuals of various generations think and feel in why they don't have the same commitment that "we" do. Whether you're a millennial or a Gen-Xer, we all come with expectations, skills, experience and needs for validation. Let's always remember to treat colleagues with respect, providing guidance and mentorship to the newly registered nurses who look to more experienced nurses for assistance in becoming the true professionals they strive to be.