

## From the Editor

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# Patient Safety in Nephrology Nurse Practice Settings

Patient safety sounds like such a basic thing. Indeed, most people assume that they are safe when they are in our care. As nurses, however, we know too well what can go wrong. As a result, beyond the obvious of not wanting to be ill, none of us want to be a patient, and if we are, we want to get out of the healthcare facility as soon as possible. We do all in our power to protect our patients and keep them safe, but we know we cannot control everything. Patient safety takes the fulltime commitment and engagement of everyone on the team.

In this issue of the *Nephrology Nursing Journal*, we report the results of a landmark national study, done on behalf of ANNA, to measure the patient safety culture in nephrology nurse practice settings. Why measure patient safety culture? Because a positive patient safety culture is necessary for patient safety.



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often patient safety and worker safety are seen as separate goals, while in reality there is a lot of synergy between them (TJC, 2012). They concluded that a culture of safety, whether for patient safety or for worker safety, has the same basic components. "A culture of safety comprises trust in being treated justly when an adverse event (or close call) occurs and is reported; the obligation and willingness to report adverse events and near misses; and reliable, effective improvement in response to the reports" (TJC, 2012, p. vii).

### Every Nurse a Leader

The initial results of this ANNA study offer a high-level road map on creating and improving our nephrology patient safety cultures. It is every nurse's responsibility to be a leader and an advocate in ensuring patient safety – whether the nurse is the solo RN in a clinic, one of several RNs in a hemodialysis unit, or one of hundreds of RNs in a hospital. Nothing that facilitates safety is too basic to ignore, no colleague or healthcare practitioner is exempt from peer review on safety practices, and no other work moves forward if the patient is not, above all else, safe in our care.

### Patient Safety Culture – Status

The study looked at the environments in which nephrology nurses practice and identified the strengths of these environments as well as the areas that need improvement. Teamwork is a strength. Since the early days of nephrology care, we have worked as a team with physicians, social workers, dietitians, and patient care technicians. Long before other specialties knew the benefits of teamwork and long before the current terms such as interprofessional collaboration were created, we knew the value of teamwork. Not that it is practiced everywhere, but it is one of the hallmarks of our specialty. Other areas need improvement – the results on handoffs and sharing information are, as we suspected, areas in which we can do much better. And simple things like handwashing – regardless of whether anyone is watching – need attention. The results are also clear that not all nephrology nurse practice settings have equally positive patient safety cultures and not everyone sees the cultures the same. The results show a wide range of patient safety cultures, from those that are evidence-based best practices to those that need a lot of improvement.

### Patient Safety and Worker Safety Synergy

The results of the study are not only about patient safety. Patient safety has implications for nurses and other healthcare personnel. Safe patient handling and infection control, for example, increase safety for staff as well as patients. A monograph from The Joint Commission (TJC) on improving patient and worker safety noted that too

### Reference

The Joint Commission (TJC). (2012). *Improving patient and worker safety*. Chicago, IL: Author.

### Journal Philosophy Statement

The *Nephrology Nursing Journal* is a refereed clinical and scientific resource that provides current information on a wide variety of subjects to facilitate the practice of professional nephrology nursing. Its purpose is to disseminate information on the latest advances in research, practice, and education to nephrology nurses to positively influence the quality of care they provide.

The *Nephrology Nursing Journal* is designed to meet the educational and information needs of nephrology nurses in a variety of roles at all levels of practice. It also serves as a resource for non-nephrology nurses. Its content expands the knowledge base for nephrology nurses, stimulates professional growth, guides research-based practice, presents new technological developments, and provides a forum for review of critical issues promoting the advancement of nephrology nursing practice.