American Nephrology Nurses Association – Celebrating 50 Years!

The American Nephrology Nurses Association (ANNA) began – as many groups do – with people with common interests coming together, recognizing mutual needs, and acting on them. In the early 1960s, nurses working in dialysis attended meetings of the American Society of Artificial Internal Organs (ASAIO), often with physician and technician members of their dialysis team. The nurses found each other and shared their experiences. These informal meetings continued for several years, and in 1966, dialysis nurses in Boston teamed up to offer the first national symposium for dialysis nurses, which was held at the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital. There was no list of existing dialysis units, so 200 invitations were sent – mostly to general hospitals. The organizers expected 35 to 50 nurses, and 150 showed up. At the end of the meeting, the group decided to hold annual nephrology nurse meetings in conjunction with ASAIO. In 1969, the American Association of Nephrology Nurses (AANN) was formed to promote knowledge about the care of patients with renal disease, and in 1970, the name of the association was changed to the American Association of Nephrology Nurses and Technicians (AANNT) to reflect the inclusion of technicians as full members.

When the association was formed, dialysis and transplantation were still in their infancy. Nurses, physicians, technicians, engineers, and inventors worked together to pioneer technologies to keep patients with end stage renal disease (ESRD) alive. There were challenges, however. Having technology and having the money to pay for it were two different things. In 1972, PL 92-603 (also known as HR1) was passed, funding the care of most patients with ESRD and launching what was designed to be the model for future health care in the United States. The AANNT leadership immediately recognized the need for nursing involvement and advocacy in the implementation of the law, and began the association’s work with the legislature and regulatory agencies that continues to this day. In 1984, AANNT returned to its roots as a nursing organization and changed its name to ANNA.

50 Years of Progress

ANNA has made great progress over its first 50 years. In this issue of the Nephrology Nursing Journal, we invited our past presidents to tell us about the challenges and advance-ments that occurred in nephrology, nephrology nursing, and ANNA while they were president (see pp. 181-204). Their stories are interesting and enlightening. In addition, at our 2019 ANNA National Symposium, NNJ will launch a series of interviews with past presidents to begin capturing an oral history of our association. We’ve also updated our timeline of nephrology and ANNA (see pp. 105-112). We invited nephrology nurses to submit their nephrology nursing memories (see pp. 113-133). Some are happy, some are sad, some are funny, and some are serious. Together, they tell the story of what it’s like to be a nephrology nurse. We also celebrate our ANNA chapters in this issue (see pp. 161-169). Many of our ANNA chapters are over 40 years old. That’s a lot of commitment from a lot of volunteers. You’ll also find a decade-by-decade pictorial of ANNA and a display of publications from the ANNA archives. This 50th anniversary issue of NNJ also features an article focusing on a patient on home dialysis and individualizing care, an article reviewing the first articles about nephrology nursing, an article on future technologies to improve patient care, and much more.

Celebrating the Past and Looking Toward the Future

Celebrating an anniversary like ANNA’s 50 years is about celebrating the past, understanding the present, and looking toward the future. ANNA’s history of expanding our knowledge, expertise, and boundaries, coupled with our shared experiences in the past, form the foundation for our future work. Nephrology nursing is a dynamic profession with a dynamic body of knowledge that must continually advance. Celebrating the progress we’ve made in our first 50 years challenges us to see how far we can go over the next 50 years and beyond.