

# President-Elect's Message

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# Update

## We Are Not Okay: The Nursing Crisis in America



Nurses today remain the most trusted profession; however, nurses are not okay! Nurses are overworked, undervalued, and exhausted. Nurses take an oath to maintain and elevate the profession's standard (part of the pinning ceremony in nursing), but many are struggling amid a growing staffing shortage. The situation is so dire the American Nurses Association recently "urged the U.S. Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary to declare the current and unsustainable nurse staffing shortage a national crisis" (2021). This staffing crisis affects all nurses, and we certainly feel the pressure in nephrology nursing as we are a highly specialized area of practice.

Nephrology nursing has dealt with staffing concerns for a long time, such as nurse-to-patient ratio mandates, the advancing age of practicing nephrology nurses, and the lack of nurses entering the specialty. With the ongoing pandemic, the strain on nephrology nurses has increased since many patients who contract COVID need some type of kidney replacement therapy such as dialysis or continuous kidney replacement therapy (CKRT). Nephrology nurses must lean on each other to navigate the ongoing nursing crisis and create strategies to increase nurse satisfaction and reduce burnout, which can result in nurses leaving the profession and, in some cases, nurse suicide.

Almost every journal, blog post, and news media outlet that mentions the dire nursing staffing situation urges companies, legislative bodies, nursing associations, and others to take action and respond. We need funding for nursing faculty to educate more nurses and provide additional admission frequency to nursing programs, rather than the traditional once or twice annually. We need quality education that results in high pass rates on state boards. Nurses must feel valued, engaged, and empowered to provide the necessary patient care and remain in the profession. Factors like equal pay, equal environmental factors to facilitate belonging, and a sense of camaraderie need to be considered.

Nurses also must be present and participating at board meetings and be included in the decision-making process at all levels. To that end, ANNA recently joined the Nurses on Boards Coalition (Latham & Brown, 2021). NOBC promotes the "health of communities and the nation through the service of nurses on boards and other bodies. All boards benefit from the unique perspective of nurses to achieve the goals of improved health and efficient and effective health care systems at the local, state and national levels" (NOBC, 2021). As a nurse, you can complete an application on the NOBC website to be considered for board positions in your area of expertise. The voices of nurses need to be heard on boards, and the time to speak has never been more important than now.


In addition, we need research on why nursing is not being selected as a career. How do we increase diversity in our profession to improve care in our communities? Nurses need employers to provide safe, healthy working environments to avoid nurse abuse, prevent post-traumatic stress disorder, and decrease the profession's abandonment.

## Where do we go from here?

The *Future of Nursing 2020-2030* report provides a great blueprint for action (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2021). In the May/June 2021 issue of the *Nephrology Nursing Journal*, Editor-in-Chief **Beth Ulrich** shares an excellent overview of how health care is aligning to "unleash the power of nurses" (Ulrich, 2021). In her editorial, she discusses how nurses need to get back to remembering our "why" and rediscovering our passion for nursing.

ANNA is committed to this effort with an updated strategic plan that focuses on the following three pillars:

- People
- Brand
- Infrastructure

The ANNA Board of Directors is committed to advocating for nephrology nurses and helping everyone remember why we are here – to promote safety, diversity, and health equity, and continue to share the essential work of all nurse heroes. I challenge you to unleash your nurse power and proudly serve as a beacon of hope for our profession today and always. 

**Angela “Angie” Kurosaka, DNP, RN, CNN, CCM, NEA-BC**  
*ANNA President-Elect*  
*Hazel Taylor Chapter #239*

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