We are celebrating the First National Nephrology Nurses Week, September 11-17, 2005. For a number of years, ANNA has held an Annual Nephrology Nurse Day Luncheon to recognize the work of ANNA nurses and chapters. This has always been a wonderfully inspiring event, but the downside has been that only those nurses in attendance at ANNA’s National Symposium had the opportunity to enjoy it. To expand the recognition of nephrology nurses and to celebrate nephrology nursing in a broader way, the ANNA Board of Directors has established a Nephrology Nurses Week that will be celebrated annually during the second full week in September.

The theme for the 2005 inaugural Nephrology Nurses Week is “Nephrology Nurses: Caring for a Lifetime.” When you first read the theme, you probably think about caring for patients throughout their lifetimes – from the tiniest baby to oldest grandpa. Look again at the theme, however, and you can see that caring for a lifetime can also mean the lifetime of a nurse. Many nurses have “grown up” in nephrology, providing caring at different levels and in different ways throughout their own lifetimes. Where the lifetimes of our patients have intersected the lifetimes of nephrology nurses, a wonderful tapestry has been woven and we have all benefited!

Be Sure to Celebrate!

Nephrology Nurses Week gives us the opportunity to celebrate nephrology nursing at three levels: personally (amongst ourselves), professionally (with colleagues), and publicly (with the general public). First, we need to commit to take time out to do something. Nurses are a giving group but we often are shy about tooting our own horns. Nephrology Nurses Week gives us permission and, in fact, should mandate us to celebrate! Here are some suggestions:

• On a personal level, take a few minutes to write down what you love about nephrology nursing.
• Next, find a way to help your colleagues celebrate. Bring in snacks for a break, make a sign for the unit, or have a coffee “toast” to each other as you pass in the halls.
• Finally, use Nephrology Nurses Week as a reason to tell others about our specialty. Invite other nurses, student nurses, or faculty to tour your unit. Set up a display in a hospital about nephrology nursing, dialysis, transplantation, organ donation, etc.

Resources Available to Nephrology Nurses

ANNA has put together a number of resources to help celebrate Nephrology Nurses Week. A poster was included with the May/June issue of the Nephrology Nursing Journal and it can also be downloaded from the ANNA web site (www.annanurse.org). Also on the website, you can find sample press releases for both chapters and facilities to use; an article on nephrology nursing that can be submitted to your organization’s in-house newsletter; the steps for requesting a Nephrology Nurses Week proclamation from your mayor, governor, or city/county council as well as a sample proclamation; and sample letters that can be sent to your local print and television media.

To help you get started with your own list of what you love about nephrology nursing and what you might include in some of your celebration materials, we asked attendees at the ANNA National Symposium in Las Vegas in April to tell us why they love nephrology nursing. We had flip charts at the Nephrology Nursing Journal booth for much of the meeting on which nurses could write about why they love nephrology nursing, but the words really started flowing during the Enrichment Opportunities Event. In a little over an hour, nephrology nurses filled over 25 flip chart pages with statements about why they love nephrology nursing! And while waiting in line to contribute their thoughts in writing, many nurses were telling each other wonderful, happy, inspiring, funny, and emotional anecdotes of their nephrology nursing experiences. You could literally feel the joy in the air. As you might expect, a number of common themes came through loud and clear and made everyone think of more and more of their own positive experiences. We hope that their statements (see pages 430 & 431) will stimulate each of you to think of your own reasons for loving our specialty!

A Time to Remind Ourselves

Nephrology Nurses Week should be a time when we all step back from the often-hurried and stressful day-to-day pace to recognize the joy we feel in our practice and the contributions of our colleagues and to celebrate our pride in the specialty of nephrology nursing. We all celebrate National Nurses Week every year to honor all that is good in the nursing profession in general. Nephrology Nurses Week is a time for us to remind ourselves of what makes our profession so special.

Beth Ulrich, EdD, RN, CHE
Editor