

Report on NIWI Experience

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I am grateful to have been a recipient of a partial scholarship to attend the Nurses in Washington Internship (NIWI), March 24-26, 2019. My NIWI experience broadened my concept of nursing advocacy. During my career as a bedside nurse and clinical nurse specialist, I had developed individual patient and institutional advocacy skills. I was proud of my role as an advocate for better patient care. But I had not ventured beyond the institutional setting to advocate for public policy or health issues. NIWI gave me new skills and opportunities to use those skills in approaching elected officials in Washington.

Since the NIWI conference I have used my newfound knowledge and sense of empowerment to:

- 1) Write letters of gratitude and encouragement to the staff of Minnesota Senators Amy Klobuchar and Tina Smith, and Congresswoman Betty McCollum. I learned that two of the three already belonged to the nursing caucus in their respective houses and all three were supportive of Title 8 and its intent to develop future nurses to meet the nursing needs of this country.
- 2) Write about my NIWI experience and the need for my pain society's members to contact their senators and representatives to support re-authorization of Title 8. The following excerpt was taken from my President's Message published April, 2019 in the electronic newsletter to the members of the American Society for Pain Management Nursing (ASPMN).

"We must urge Congress to reauthorize Title 8 which allocates money for nurse workforce development. Title 8 provides funds for advanced nursing education, workforce diversity, capacity for basic nursing education, and nursing faculty development. This is so important because nurses are a vital force for better health care. More nurses are needed to care for the vulnerable: e.g. elders, the homeless, those with HIV/AIDs, mental illness, and substance use disorders. Yet the supply of registered nurses is aging. The average age of the American nurse is 51 years of age and 29% are over the age of 60. Congress had funded Title 8 for \$249 million in 2018 and 2019. The administration's 2020 budget proposes to cut that funding by 67% to only \$83 million. In response, the Nursing Community Coalition is asking to increase the nurse workforce development funds to \$266 million with an additional \$173 million for the National Institute of Nursing Research."

- 3) Participate in a panel presentation at the national conference of the American Pain Society, April 5, 2019 in Milwaukee, WI. My topic was "Advocacy in Pain Management Nursing". Excerpts from that powerpoint presentation included:

- a. *“Policy advocacy is the knowledge-based action intended to improve health by influencing system level decisions.”*
 - b. *“An individually focused view has the effect of limiting assessment of root causes of injustices or inequities leading us to pursue short-term, one-off solutions to individually experienced effects of systemic problems.”(Spenceley et al, 2006 p.183)*
- 4) Send instructions in May 2019 to members of the Upper Midwest Chapter of ASPMN on how to contact their Senators and Representatives to support the re-authorization of Title 8. Lessons learned at NIWI included: Along with one’s name and address (which indicates you’re a voting constituent), include your status as a nurse. Tell personal stories about your experiences as a nurse, and why a potential nursing shortage is such a concern to you.
 - 5) Connect with Dr. Vanila Singh, Chief Medical Officer for the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to address the issues of the opioid crisis in the U.S. The American Society for Pain Management Nursing (ASPMN) submitted comments on the department’s **Draft Report on Pain Management Best Practices: Updates, Gaps, Inconsistencies, and Recommendations** before the deadline on April 1, 2019.
 - 6) Communicate with Dr. Robert Campbell, Director of Clinical Standards Interpretation Hospital / Ambulatory Programs and Director of Medication Management of the Joint Commission, in order to collaborate with ASPMN. We will address the inconsistencies of TJC reviewers, and support the practice of **not** dosing opioids based on pain intensity alone. We have arranged a future Twitter Chat that will allow nurses around the country to ask Dr. Campbell questions about TJC pain standards.
 - 7) Connect with a Congressman from MN who is interested in ASPMN participation in future initiatives about the opioid crisis in MN.

Respectfully Submitted,
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