

# FROM THE President

## Strong Values, Strength in Practice



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2012-2013

Congratulations to all for another successful NAON Congress. The leadership transition is final as an incredible opportunity and responsibility passes along our continuum. I am both honored and humbled to accept the role of NAON's 2012–2013 President. The confidence and trust our members have given me is truly awesome. In 1996 when I served as president of my local Indiana chapter, I did not imagine that I would be at the helm of this wonderful association. Contemplating a theme for my year as your president was not an easy task. When I reflected about NAON's 33 years of positive influence in my professional career, who we are, what we do, and the contributions we make, the words *Strong Values Strength in Practice* quickly emerged.

*Webster's New World Dictionary 1970* (2nd edition) contains 13 different concepts to define the word *value*. One provides a context for nursing and states that value is something "desirable or worthy of esteem for its own sake; a thing or quality having internal worth." Social norms, principles, standards, the goodness of people, and goals also come to mind when values are discussed or considered. Values can be extrinsic those derived from an outside source or intrinsic ones considered good in themselves.

I have always felt that nursing was an intrinsically motivating profession because we gain satisfaction from the good we do for others. During interviews I consistently ask candidates to tell me about their nursing values. Why did they choose nursing? What keeps them coming back every day? How do they want to deliver their nursing care? I don't recall receiving an answer that reflects our salaries or working hours. However, I frequently hear "it is the patients, I love the work, I like being able to improve a patient's life." I find that these questions and answers reflect a candidate's professional nursing

value system. These discussions also speak to a potential employee's ability to embrace and imbue caring into their nursing practice.

Practice includes performing an action frequently, such as a habit or custom. Professional practice also is defined as doing something repeatedly to gain proficiency and with the application of knowledge. As nurses, we perform tasks expanding our expertise and skills. Practice involves conditions in different situations. Nursing practice is complex occurring in progressively more complex settings. Orthopaedic nursing practice has changed considerably since many NAON members entered the profession. The strength of our association has provided us with the knowledge to enhance our professional nursing practice.

Who in your life embodies strong values and strength in practice? I think of my first head nurse in the local hospital where I worked as a nursing assistant while going to college. She was a retired Army major and served in England during World War II. She was really quite formidable yet had a quiet and kind demeanor. I will never forget the encouragement she gave me when I didn't think that completing nursing school was in my future. I always remember her sound advice when she said "be humble, it's OK to say you don't know." The second was another Head Nurse who managed the first orthopaedic unit I worked on after completing nursing school. Again, an astounding individual who ran a "tight ship" saw some potential in a young nurse and encouraged her to attend a professional meeting of local orthopaedic nurses. Your NAON president is forever grateful to this nurse who demonstrated strong values and strength in her orthopaedic nursing practice.

I recently read the book *We Band of Angels* by Elizabeth M. Norman. Starting in the fall of 1941 and set in the Philippines, the book is a true yet

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untold story about Army and Navy nurses who ended up being trapped on the Bataan peninsula in early 1942. These nurses were later moved to the island of Corregidor before being interred at Santo Tomas POW camp for the rest of World War II. Many did not begin working in surgery however; they quickly perfected their skills by working 20-hour shifts and then switching to postoperative “wards” containing hundreds of patients. The hospital on Bataan was hidden in the jungle, using trees as a cover from the air attacks. When the nurses were ordered to leave Bataan, they received a 20-minute warning. At the time their jungle hospital contained 1800 defenseless men. Remembering their Nightingale pledge, the nurses resisted at first and never forgot the expressions of the men as they boarded trucks driving them to a beach and the boats that took them relative safety on Corregidor. One nursing commander refused to evacuate her staff until a colonel gave his permission for the Filipino nurses to accompany them. On Corregidor they worked similar hours in a series of underground tunnels. One nurse wrote in her diary from Corregidor “still on duty in the orthopaedic ward. Hospital is filled to capacity. We’re using triple decker beds now.” The Santo Tomas prison camp was no better as they cared for detainees suffering from diseases such as tuberculosis, malnutrition, beriberi, pellagra, and scurvy. As time continued, the nurses themselves became

sick with the same ailments of their patients. The example of strong values and strength in practice resonates in this book about these nurses. It serves as an exemplar to the profession and I recommend it to everyone.

Thirty-three years is an impressive time span for a nursing specialty association. I believe that NAON’s strong values and commitment to maintain strength in orthopaedic nursing practice are a key component for our success. We have members who are younger than NAON benefiting from the vision of our early leaders and continued strength the association’s presence provides. Contemplating upon my friend and colleague Mary Jo Satusky’s tenure as our President, I am energized by NAON’s achievements and continued potential. As a member, do you think about your values and the strength in your practice or commitment to NAON? I hope to stimulate members to consider these important concepts within NAON and their own professional career. NAON has experienced significant growth in the last year: increased membership, enhanced educational programs, and a solid financial future. While serving as your President, I want to build upon these accomplishments guaranteeing our position as a leader in orthopaedics. In the next year, let’s work together to increase our commitment and maintain NAON’s strong values and strength in orthopaedic nursing practice.



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