Role of NPs Highlighted in Senate Hearing on Primary Care

On April 23, 2013, the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Subcommittee held a hearing titled, “Successful Primary Care Programs: Creating the Workforce We Need” to call attention to the demand for primary care services and workforce initiatives currently underway to meet it. Deborah Wachtel, ANP, MPH, MSN, President of the Vermont Nurse Practitioner Association and Vermont State representative for the American Association of Nurse Practitioners, was asked to provide testimony on the role of nurse practitioners (NPs) in increasing access to care, and on how nursing education and training programs are integral to preparing more NPs in primary care. In her testimony, Ms. Wachtel described the importance of continued support for nursing education programs to allow more students to enter into advanced practice.

“According to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, since 2010, enrollments in master’s and doctor of nursing practice programs grew by 33%, yet more encouraging, since 2010, graduations from these programs increased by 40%...While this growth rate is critical to addressing the shortage of primary care providers, it is sobering to note that our schools of nursing also turned away 9,640 qualified applicants to primary care nurse practitioner programs due to faculty shortage, budget restraints, and lack of clinical sites.”

HELP Subcommittee Chairman Bernie Sanders (I-VT) inquired how NPs can expand their role in providing primary care, to which Ms. Wachtel illustrated how in the Senator’s home state of Vermont, an NP practice that opened in an area experiencing a primary care provider shortage saw 2,000 visits during its first year, leading to a decrease in non-emergency and costly ER visits. “Nurse practitioners play an important role in the provision of primary health care,” said Chairman Sanders, “and we need to support nurse practitioner training programs and address faculty shortages so that the profession can continue to grow to meet the significant need across the country.”

Other panel witnesses included Rebecca Spitzgo, Associate Administrator for the Bureau of Clinician Recruitment and Service at the Health Resources and Services Administration and Director of the National Health Service Corps; George S. Rust, MD, MPH, Professor of Family Medicine at the Morehouse School of Medicine and Co-Director of the National Center for Primary Care in Atlanta, GA; Dan Hawkins, Senior Vice President, Public Policy and Research at the National Association of Community Health Centers in Washington, DC; Paul R. G. Cunningham, MD, FACS, Dean and Senior Associate Vice Chancellor for Medical Affairs at the Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University in Greenville, NC; and Bruce Koeppen, MD, PhD, Founding Dean of the Frank H. Netter, MD, School of Medicine at Quinnipiac University in Hamden, CT. To watch the hearing and read the witnesses’ testimonies, visit: http://www.help.senate.gov/hearings/hearing/?id=bf0c0bd6-5056-a032-52ed-aa0f74670773.
AACN Supports Nurses Week Resolution

In recognition of the nation’s nearly 3.1 million registered nurses (RNs), Representative Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX) introduced H.Res 201: Supporting the goals and ideals of National Nurses Week on May 6, 2013, through May 12, 2013. The resolution has 47 original cosponsors, including House Nursing Caucus co-chairs Rep. Lois Capps, RN, (D-CA) and Rep. David Joyce (R-OH). The resolution highlights the significant contributions RNs make to millions of patients across the country. National Nurses Week commenced on May 6 (National Nurses Day), and ended May 12 (Florence Nightingale’s birthday). AACN submitted a letter to Rep. Johnson in support of the resolution as well as thank you letters to Reps. Capps and Joyce for their cosponsorship. To view the letters, see: http://www.aacn.nche.edu/government-affairs/support-legislation.


HRSA Releases Report Addressing Sequestration for FY 2013

As directed by the Office of Management and Budget, federal agencies have submitted reports on how they plan to continue operating for the remainder of Fiscal Year (FY) 2013 under sequestration. Sequestration, or across-the-board cuts to discretionary spending as mandated through the Budget Control Act of 2011, reduces funding for programs administered by the Health Resources Service Administration (HRSA). This translates to an overall budget cut of approximately $366 million for the agency compared to its FY 2012 funding level. HRSA’s Sequestration Operating Report for FY 2013 reveals that the Nursing Workforce Development programs (Title VIII of the Public Health Service Act) would receive a cut of approximately 5.04%, which equates to a funding level of $218.272 million in FY 2013 (compared to $231.099 million in FY 2012).

Under sequestration, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) is subjected to a cut of approximately 5.2% ($4.119 billion) in FY 2013. The National Institute for Nursing Research (NINR) would be reduced by approximately $8.22 million. AACN understands that difficult decisions that will need to be made regarding deficit reduction and will continue to advocate for programs such as Title VIII, the NINR, and the Nurse-Managed Health Clinics (Title III of the Public Health Service Act) in FY 2014 as these programs are a direct investment the nursing profession and the nation’s health. AACN’s Sequestration: Estimating the Impact on America’s Nursing Workforce and Healthcare Discoveries policy brief (http://www.aacn.nche.edu/government-affairs/AACN-Sequestration-Factsheet.pdf) details how these cuts would impact individual Title VIII programs and impede the efforts of NIH.

Title VIII Assistance for Veterans

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has announced a new program that aims to help military veterans with experience or training in healthcare settings pursue baccalaureate nursing education. The Veterans’ Bachelor of Science in Nursing (VBSN) Program is to be administered by HRSA and is funded through the Title VIII Nurse Education, Practice, Quality and Retention Grants program (Nursing Workforce Development programs, Public Health Service Act). VBSN is expected to fund nine cooperative agreements with schools of nursing to increase enrollment and retention of veterans in their programs. Funds will also be used to investigate the possibility of awarding academic credit for prior military healthcare experience and to train faculty to provide support services to veterans.
“The Veterans’ Bachelor of Science in Nursing Program recognizes the skills, experience and sacrifices of our veterans, while helping to grow our nursing workforce,” said HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius. “It helps veterans formalize their skills to get jobs, while strengthening Americans’ access to care.” This program reflects efforts of HRSA and HHS at-large to matriculate a greater number of experienced veterans into health professions programs, including nursing. HRSA’s launch of the program is timely given the rising need for a greater number of highly-educated nurses.

For more information about this new program, see: http://www.grants.gov/search/search.do?mode=VIEW&oppId=232153.

New NIH Council of Councils Members Named

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Council of Councils was established in 2007 to advise the NIH Director on policies and activities of the Division of Program Coordination, Planning, and Strategic Initiatives, including “making recommendations on research that represents important areas of emerging scientific opportunities, rising public health challenges, or knowledge gaps that deserve special emphasis or would otherwise benefit from strategic planning and coordination. The council is composed of 27 members nominated by the NIH Institutes and Centers (IC) and from the Council of Public Representatives, an advisory committee to the NIH Office of the Director. Council members bring knowledge of their individual IC’s missions and operations, not as official representatives, but to provide advice beyond the research agenda of any individual IC.”

AACN applauds Dr. Barbara J. Guthrie, PhD, RN, FAAN, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Professor at Yale University and National Advisory Council for Nursing Research member for her appointment to the council. Dr. Guthrie will serve her term on the council through October 31, 2015. To learn more about the NIH Council of Councils, including a full roster of members, see: http://dpcpsi.nih.gov/council/.

AACN Member Teri Murray Meets President Clinton

AACN member Dr. Teri Murray, Dean of the School of Nursing at Saint Louis University in Missouri, recently had the opportunity to meet former President Bill Clinton and his daughter Chelsea Clinton at an event for the annual meeting of the Clinton Global Initiative University (CGI U) in April at Washington University in St. Louis.

CGI U brings together students, youth organizations, experts, and celebrities to discuss and develop innovative solutions to pressing global challenges including education; environment and climate change; peace and human rights; poverty alleviation; and public health.

The dinner event was also attended by local philanthropists, business leaders, and politicians, such as Senator Claire McCaskill (D-MO) and Missouri Attorney General Chris Koster. AACN recognizes the importance of our members’ valuable leadership both within the association and the public. Dr. Murray served on the AACN Board of Directors from 2009 until 2013, and chaired the Government Affairs Committee from 2010 to 2013.
Funding Opportunities for PCOR Researchers

The following funding announcement may be of interest to AACN member institutions interested in patient centered outcomes research (PCOR):

The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, whose mission is to improve the quality, safety, efficiency, and effectiveness of health care for all Americans, is requesting applications for a new multi-year, large-scale funding opportunity to support the development of PCOR researchers.

“PCOR seeks to integrate evidence into practice and decision-making in the United States’ health care system. Applicants can be academic or non-academic institutions, (e.g., the health care delivery system, state and local governments, health plans, and research networks).”

The deadline for application submission is July 17, 2013. Further information and guidelines for submission can be found at: http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-HS-13-008.html.

2013 AACN Policy Luminary Award: Call for Nominations

Each year, AACN recognizes an outstanding nursing leader whose significant contributions in the policy arena work to advance the nursing profession. Presented to this individual at the Fall Semiannual Meeting, the AACN Policy Luminary Award has highlighted some of nursing’s most prominent leaders since 2009. Past recipients of the Policy Luminary Award have included: Dr. Mary Wakefield, Administrator of the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration, Dr. Mary Naylor, Marian S. Ware Professor in Gerontology at the University of Pennsylvania and Director of New Courtland Center for Transitions and Health; Dr. Ellen-Marie Whelan, Senior Advisor at the Center for Medicare & Medicaid Innovation; and most recently Dr. Ada Sue Hinshaw, the first director of the National Institute of Nursing Research at the National Institutes of Health, who is currently serving as dean at the Uniformed Services University for Health Professions.

AACN’s Government Affairs Committee is seeking nominations for this year’s award. Each nomination package should include two letters of recommendation from peers, the nominee’s CV, and a one page bio-sketch. Materials should be submitted to Director of Government Affairs Suzanne Miyamoto at Smiyamoto@aacn.nche.edu.

Nominations are due Monday, September 16, 2013, by 5pm ET.

For more information on the Policy Luminary Award, see: http://www.aacn.nche.edu/membership/awards/CallforNomPolicy.pdf.

Dr. Mary Woo to Give 2013 NINR Director’s Lecture

The National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR) will host its third annual Director’s Lecture on Tuesday, May 21, 2013, from 10:30-11:30am ET. The 2013 Director’s Lecture will be given by Dr. Mary Woo, DNSc, RN, FAAN, a cardiovascular researcher and professor at the University of California at Los Angeles School of Nursing. During her lecture titled, “It’s All in the Mind: Heart Failure and the Brain,” Dr. Woo will discuss her work which examines predictors of sudden death risk as well as the influences of sleep on brain structure in heart failure. Notably, Dr. Woo was the first investigator to report that the link between gray matter loss in heart failure patients is impacted by the amount of sleep-disordered breathing as well as gender. The lecture will take place at the Lipssett Amphitheater in the Clinical Center (Building 10) on the NIH Campus in Bethesda, Maryland. It is free and open to the public.

For more information, see: http://www.ninr.nih.gov/newsandinformation/events/directorslecture2013.