AACN 2015 Federal Policy Agenda

AACN’s Board of Directors recently approved the association’s 2015 Federal Policy Agenda. Each year, this agenda is developed by AACN’s Government Affairs Committee and guides the direction of AACN’s advocacy work. Consistent with the organization’s history, AACN’s 2015 Federal Policy Agenda brings the voice of academic nursing to the many facets of policy that impact the profession and health care. Additionally, this guiding framework takes into account the impact of the political and fiscal climates on the national legislative agenda. The four overarching priorities (equally valued) include:

- Advance policies that allow academic institutions to meet the need for a more highly-educated and diverse nursing workforce, focusing on seamless academic progression, affordability, and interprofessional education.
- Amplify nursing leadership to transform America’s healthcare delivery system into one that is patient-centered and team-based.
- Secure federal investments that strengthen the academic nursing infrastructure.
- Secure federal investments in research and elevate the role of nursing science in healthcare innovation, discovery, and application.

Additionally, AACN’s 2015 Strategic Government Affairs Goals include:

- Enhance AACN member awareness of pressing policy opportunities for engagement and notify AACN members of federal programmatic announcements.
- Develop healthcare policy leaders from within the nursing profession to be a formidable voice in the state and federal policy arenas.

These priorities and goals drive AACN’s legislative and advocacy work to educate Congress, the Administration, and the public. For questions regarding AACN’s Federal Policy Agenda, please contact AACN’s Senior Director of Government Affairs and Health Policy, Dr. Suzanne Miyamoto, at SMiyamoto@aacn.nche.edu.

Dr. Julie Sochalski to Deliver Keynote Speech at AACN’s 2015 Student Policy Summit

This year’s keynote presentation at AACN’s sixth annual Student Policy Summit will feature Julie Sochalski, PhD, RN, FAAN, Associate Professor of Nursing at the University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing. Prior to her current role, Dr. Sochalski worked for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services where she served as the Director of the Division of Nursing and Principal Advisor for Health Workforce Policy at the Health Resources and Services Administration. In this capacity, Dr. Sochalski was responsible for directing initiatives to advance research and programs to effectively develop a highly-skilled healthcare workforce.
Dr. Sochalski’s research portfolio has influenced policy makers nationwide and created tools that have helped improve health outcomes and strengthen the healthcare workforce. Under a grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH), she directed a series of national and international studies that explored critical workforce factors that affected patient care and patient outcomes. Her research has also investigated the domestic and international trends in healthcare workforce shortages, which she then used to develop policy recommendations for effectively promoting and preparing highly educated healthcare professionals.

The Student Policy Summit will convene 200 students from across the nation for a dynamic three-day program focused on federal policy and nursing’s role in professional advocacy. AACN is excited to welcome Dr. Sochalski to speak with and inspire Summit attendees as she kicks-off their policy experience in Washington, DC.

Mark Your Calendars for AACN’s Spring Virtual Advocacy Day on March 23, 2015

AACN will be hosting its spring Virtual Advocacy Day on Monday, March 23, 2015 in conjunction with AACN’s Hill Day during the Spring Annual Meeting in Washington, DC. Your support is critical to ensuring that nursing’s voice is at the forefront of those that influence policy decision-making at the federal level. Members of AACN’s Grassroots Network will receive an email on March 23 asking them to send a message to their federal legislators requesting they support funding priorities impacting nursing education and research in Fiscal Year 2016, as well as other pressing policy initiatives. AACN encourages you to participate as every voice counts! To join AACN’s Grassroots Network, see: http://www.aacn.nche.edu/government-affairs/take-action. AACN appreciates all that our members do to support programs and legislation that advance our profession and the health of our patients.

AACN Comments on 21st Century Cures Discussion

AACN recently commented on a discussion document outlining priorities in draft legislation for the 21st Century Cures Act. This initiative aims to accelerate the discovery and dissemination of healthcare cures. House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Fred Upton (R-MI) and Ranking Member Diana DeGette (D-CO) emphasized the need for Congress to support healthcare research through taking “a comprehensive look at what steps we can take to accelerate the pace of cures in America. We are looking at the full arc of this process – from the discovery of clues in basic science, to streamlining the drug and device development process, to unleashing the power of digital medicine and social media at the treatment delivery phase.”

In its comments to the committee, AACN applauded the goals of the legislation to “aid in the discovery, development, and delivery of the next generation of patient-centered solutions here in the United States.” AACN is committed to advancing nursing and healthcare science, which encompass the foundation for evidence-based practice. To do so, it is essential that research infrastructure can support future generations of nursing and healthcare scientists. According to AACN data, there were 5,145 nursing students enrolled in research-focused doctoral programs last year. The 21st Century Cures Act would support young emerging scientists in the field.

Additionally, AACN urged the Committee to consider including provider-neutral language throughout the legislation in order to ensure the full breadth of providers is captured so that their expertise and services can be offered to the public. AACN will continue to weigh-in and collaborate with its partners as the 21st Century Cures Act advances through the legislative process.

Read AACN’s full comments here.
AACN, along with its colleagues representing Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs), submitted comments earlier this month to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) regarding a proposed rule for the Accountable Care Organizations (ACO) Medicare Shared Savings Program. This program was established to "facilitate coordination and cooperation among providers to improve the quality of care for Medicare Fee-For-Services beneficiaries and reduce unnecessary costs. Eligible providers, hospitals, and suppliers may participate in the Shared Savings Program by creating or participating in an ACO. The Shared Savings Program will reward ACOs that lower their growth in healthcare costs while meeting performance standards on quality of care and putting patients first."

Existing statute requires that a medical director who is also a physician oversees clinical management of an ACO. The APRN community responded to CMS citing that APRNs are highly-qualified to serve in this capacity and urged CMS to remove this requirement. Removal of this unnecessary and burdensome oversight will help ensure patients have access to the health providers they need while upholding recommendations set forth by the Institute of Medicine to utilize APRNs as equal partners in transformative healthcare delivery models.

NIH Director Dr. Francis Collins Discusses the Future of Biomedical Research

On February 9, 2015, The Chronicle of Higher Education interviewed NIH Director Francis Collins, MD, PhD about the future of biomedical research. In the interview Dr. Collins discussed his “guardedly optimistic” feelings about the future of the NIH budget.

Regarding Congress’ support, Dr. Collins stated, “the one thing that people on both sides of the aisle… and in both branches seem to agree is that medical research is really important. It's our best hope for answering many of the difficult challenges we have with health, and it's about the best way to stimulate our economy at the same time. So I think there is, at least, intellectual agreement that something [ought] to be done to try to get NIH back on a stable trajectory, and that's not just coming from one party. I've heard that from both.” Given the complexity of today’s health ailments, interdisciplinary research approaches, including biomedical research, are imperative to ensuring treatments for chronic and acute diseases continue to be discovered. Dr. Collins also discussed the Precision Medicine Initiative, which aims to advance basic research, including molecular biology, genomics, and bioinformatics that will one day cure diseases such as cancer, and provide information necessary to keep families and individuals healthier.

To watch the full interview between Dr. Collins and The Chronicle of Higher Education, please visit: http://chronicle.com/article/Video-NIH-Director-Sees/151725/.

Join NINR for Director’s Lecture

On March 5, 2015, the National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR) will host the first of three 2015 NINR Director’s Lectures. This event is free, open to the public, and will be held in Lipsett Amphitheater (Building 10), at the NIH main campus in Bethesda, MD.

Cornelia Beck, PhD, RN, FAAN will present her lecture “Travels of a Nurse Researcher: From Alzheimer’s Interventions to Translational Science.” Since 1984, Dr. Beck, a professor at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, has researched strategies to improve best practices in long-term care settings and non-drug interventions to alleviate problem behavior and promote functional performance in persons with dementia. Dr. Beck’s accomplishments include receiving national awards, participating on numerous advisory councils, writing over 200 publications, and
extensive lecturing throughout the world.

For more information, please visit www.ninr.nih.gov/directorslecture.

**NOVA Roundtable Connects Nursing Organizations on Veteran Healthcare Issues**

On February 13, the Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs (NOVA) hosted an annual legislative roundtable in Washington, DC. The roundtable invited organizations with a vested interest in veterans’ issues to discuss pressing concerns, including improving access to high-quality services. Legislative staff from the Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs, Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, and the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs were invited to share the committee members’ priorities, particularly surrounding the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act. Dr. Donna Gage, Chief Nurse Officer, Office of Nursing Services and Dr. Karen Ott, Director for Policy and Legislation, Office of Nursing Services at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs described the department’s efforts to improve processes that connect veterans with timely health care.

AACN staff attended this event and had the opportunity to share its legislative priorities for 2015, including those that aim to strengthen nursing’s role in caring for our nation’s veterans. AACN and its APRN colleagues expressed support for the Veterans Health Administration’s (VHA) proposal to recognize APRNs as full practice providers in its Nursing Handbook, which drives nursing practice within VHA facilities. Additionally, AACN communicated its ongoing effort to expand support for the White House’s [Joining Forces](http://www.jointingforces.org) initiative that connects the public and private sectors to ensure that service members, veterans, and their families are equipped with the resources they need to succeed. Currently, over 660 schools of nursing have taken the pledge to support Joining Forces.

**Call for Applications APHA Public Health Fellowship in Government**

The [American Public Health Association](http://www.apha.org) (APHA) is now applications for the 2015-2016 APHA Public Health Fellowship in Government. Interested candidates must have strong public health credentials and be willing to spend one year in Washington, D.C. Selected candidates will have the opportunity to work in a Congressional office on legislative and policy issues related to health, the environment, or other public health concerns.

The fellowship aims to:

- Establish and nurture critical links between federal decision makers and public health professionals;
- Educate public health professionals about the legislative process and the skills necessary to be successful including the ability to translate complex public health issues into legislative, regulatory and policy initiatives;
- Foster positive exchanges between public health professionals and policymakers; and
- Increase the visibility and impact public health professional in the policy arena.

The fellowship will begin in September 2015 and continue through August 2016. Applications, additional information and brief articles from the previous fellows are available on APHA’s website. The application, including a CV and three letters of recommendation, is due to APHA by March 9, 2015.
2015 Healthy Aging Summit

Registration is now open for the American College of Preventive Medicine’s 2015 Healthy Aging Summit. The Summit will be held in Washington, DC from July 27-28, 2015.

It is estimated that as of 2010, the U.S. population included more than 40 million persons age 65 years or older. It is predicted by 2030, the United States will have over 72 million living over the age of 65 years old. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion is conducting research on social determinants of health to determine those factors that can inhibit and enhance healthy aging in our country. The Summit will explore the science behind healthy aging and have opportunities for clinicians, public health officials, educators, students and consumers to get involved in helping to ensure that all Americans live longer, healthier lives.

Participants will have the opportunity to:

- Explore the science of healthy aging
- Identify knowledge gaps that require further investigation
- Promote the role of prevention and preventive services in improving quality of life in later years
- Mobilize action to improve the delivery of care for those aging in place or in transition

To register for the Summit please visit the Healthy Aging Summit Registration Page.

AACN Health Policy on Twitter

AACN’s Health Policy Twitter account (@AACNPolicy) took part in two social media initiatives on Wednesday, February 18, 2015.

Million Hearts
The Million Hearts initiative brings together communities, health systems, nonprofit organizations, federal agencies and private health sectors across the country to help improve cardiovascular health in our nation. On Wednesday, February 18, at 2:00pm ET, Million Hearts and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Office on Minority Health hosted a Twitter chat on how health care professionals can help improve patients’ blood pressure control. The chat featured several healthcare professionals who discussed ways to improve hypertension control among patients. The chat was part of several events taking place this February for #HeartMonthChat.

For more information on the Million Hearts initiative be sure to follow them on Twitter at @MillionHeartsUS.

Big Data
The Patient Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) is a nonprofit, nongovernmental organization that was created through the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010, with the mission to “improve the quality and relevance of evidence available to help patients, caregivers, clinicians, employers, insurers, and policy makers make informed health decisions.” On Wednesday, February 18, at 2:00pm ET, the Patient Centered Outcomes Research Institute and Health Affairs, hosted a questions and answer session Twitter chat. PCORI’s Director of Clinical Effectiveness Research Methods and Infrastructure Program, Rachael Fleurence, and Associate Director, Sarah Greene, answered questions about opportunities and challenges that “big data” can present for researchers. Discussion also covered how “big data” can be used in efforts to advance clinical research and improve patient outcomes.

To read the conversation on Twitter, please search #healthdatachat, and be sure to follow @PCORI and @Health_Affairs.