



# VA APN NEWS

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**Advanced Practice Nursing Advisory Group  
(APNAG)**

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS  
AFFAIRS  
ADVANCED PRACTICE NURSING

SUMMER 2009

## ADVANCED PRACTICE NURSING DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

### **VA APNs HOLD 2ND NATIONAL CONFERENCE IN LAS VEGAS, NEVADA FEBRUARY 2009**



### **“VA-Keeping the Promise to Those Who Served”**

The VISN 22/VA National Joint APN Conference was a resounding success in promoting clinical knowledge and professional development for VHA advanced practice nurses. This was the 2nd National APN conference. ONS and APNAG joined with VISN 22 to offer this opportunity for networking, and information sharing.

The first day was devoted to professional issues providing a national perspective affecting Advanced Practice Nurses (APNs).

Cathy Rick, ONS Chief, presented “Vision for Advanced Practice Nursing in the VA”. Her presentation focused on how APNs have positively influenced veteran patient outcomes and examined the future direction of the VHA in optimizing care of the veteran and the expanded use of the advanced practice nurse. Other topics included presentations on the Advanced Practice Nursing Advisory Group (APNAG), Career Paths and Qualification Standards, Secure messaging ( My-HealtheVet) and APN compensation issues.

The afternoon included break out sessions focusing on professional growth and development.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> day were dedicated to clinical issues and the presentations were outstanding. Topics ranged from diabetes to mental health and even included a session on “Chi Gong”. The presentations kept all involved and interested.

The planning committee for this joint conference deserve recognition and accolades. They include but are not limited to :

Nancy Cook, VISN 16 (chair); Mary Lovelady, VISN 7; Anna Alt-White (CO); Julie Marcum, VISN 20; Amy Smith, VISN 16; Paul Rappazzini, EES; Richard Talusan, Denise Bartlett-Chekal, John Bright, Mildred Martin, Sheila Mathewson, Catherine Sines, and Roberta McCoy VISN 22.

The next joint APRN conference will be planned over the next 2 years. Each year we hope to improve registration, decrease barriers to attendance and continue to offer innovative, timely clinical and professional topics.

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**APN Web pages– available on COLLAGE**

**Tool Kit, FAQs, Orientation Templates**

**[http://vaww.collage.research.med.va.gov/collage/N\\_APNAG/](http://vaww.collage.research.med.va.gov/collage/N_APNAG/)**

**Newsletters**

**<http://www1.va.gov/nursing/page.cfm?pg=120>**

## GREETINGS FROM APNAG!

By Janette (Jan) Elliott, RN-BC, MSN, AOCN

My continued THANKS to all VA APNs for the tremendous job you do caring for our veterans. You are the heart and soul of the VA! YOU are the people who help all of VA nursing makes advances in patient care. YOU are called to not only be advanced practice nurses but to advance the practice of nursing!

It was GREAT seeing so many of you at the February APN conference in Las Vegas. And we're deeply sorry we couldn't accept all who registered. If it had been our choice, everyone who wanted to register could have attended.

I would like to update you on the work the APNAG has been doing:

- We continue to work to keep APNs informed of happenings within the larger VA system and have been working toward a national email group for APNs. This is proving to be a more difficult task than we anticipated, but we are making progress.
- We work in cooperation with the Office of Nursing Service (ONS) and the National Nurse Executive Council (NNEC) to identify examples of ways APNs have been recognized at their facilities both monetarily and otherwise. If you have examples of how you have been recognized, I invite you to share with us so we can share with others.
- We are looking for examples of APN scopes of practice and of proficiency reports that we can share. This would be of tremendous assistance to other APNs. We would ask that names and locations be deleted from these so they remain anonymous. These would be posted to be accessed freely. Examples could be emailed to me or your APNAG representative.
- We are also looking for examples of APN council charters. We receive repeated requests for such documents and would like to make examples available. These can be emailed to me (Janette.Elliott@va.gov) or your APNAG representative (see list below).

I would again invite you to address the APNAG with your questions, concerns, suggestions. You are also invited to tell us the GOOD things that are happening where you are! We will continue to do our very best to represent you and in turn guide you in finding answers to your questions.

The outlook group name for the APNAG is **"VHA CO APN Advisory Group."**

Facilitator for APNAG: Karen Ott, RN, MS, Office of Nursing Service

Janette Elliott, RN-BC, MSN, AOCN—Chair  
 Carolyn Anich, PhD, APRN, CNS—Co-Chair  
 Appointment pending , VISNs 1 & 2.  
 Nora Krick, MSN, RN, APN, VISNs 3 & 4  
 Joan Galbraith, MSN, RN, ANP, VISNs 5 & 6  
 Mary Lovelady, MSN, RN, ANP-BC, CS-BC VISNs 7 & 8  
 Rebecca Waldon, MSN, FNP-BC, GNP-BC, VISNs 9 & 10

Mary Falls, MSN, APNP, VISNs 11 & 12  
 Sheila Dunn, MSN, ANP-BC, VISNs 15 & 23  
 Nancy Cook, RN, MSN, FNP-BC, VISNs 16 & 17  
 Eve Broughton, MSN, ACNS-BC, VISNs 18 & 19  
 Julie Marcum, APRN, CCRN VISN 20  
 Mary Thomas, RN, MS, CNS , VISNs 21 & 22  
 Kimberly Radant, MS, RN, Nurse Executive



Jan Elliott, APNAG Chair,  
 stands beside her poster at the  
 National APN Conference  
 February 2009, Las Vegas

## ***APN Liaison Representatives: Facilitating Communication Among APNs Nationwide***

The Advanced Practice Nursing Liaison Group (APN Liaison Group) serves in an advisory capacity to the Advanced Practice Nursing Advisory Group (APNAG) regarding issues and activities of VHA related to advanced practice nursing both within and external to Veteran's HealthCare Administration (VHA). The APNAG serves in an advisory capacity to the National Nurse Executive Committee (NNEC).

The APN Liaison Group functions as a communication network with APNs throughout the VHA. The APN Liaison Group has a monthly teleconference meeting, chaired by two APNAG members. The APN Liaison Group and the APNAG also collaborate in ad hoc forums.

In a system as large as VHS, employing more than 4000 Advanced Practice Nurses, with new information regarding clinical and professional issues sent out daily, communication becomes a challenge. In this era of telecommunications, systems can become overloaded and redundant, while sometimes omitting details important to individuals. APN Liaisons, both representatives and alternates, are meeting this challenge in multiple ways. Some are utilizing specific VISN email groups, many are using teleconferencing for immediate interaction and communication. APN Liaisons (representatives and alternates) are responsible for serving as the links between the Office of Nursing Service, the Advanced Practice Nursing Advisory Group and APNs in all VISN VA facilities.

Please make sure you are in contact with your VISN Representative or Alternate. If you have problems contacting them please notify APNAG.

### **VISN APN Representatives and Alternates :**

VISN 1- Gail Bolduc, Jill Carter

VISN 2- Charlotte Ballew, Chris Norton

VISN 3- Aaron Schneider, Rochelle Rubin

VISN 4- Jan Jones, Kathy Chicano

VISN 5- Pam Rachal, Lucia Minville

VISN 6- Sherry Goar, Sherry Hall

VISN 7- Marie Mompoin, Ann Mahaney-Price

VISN 8 Jerome Steffe, Kim Vanerheuval

VISN 9- Penny Thayer, need an alternate

VISN 10 Laura Beck-Wilson, Pat Weiskittel

VISN 11 Denise Adams, need an alternate

VISN 12 Karen Clark, Jenny O'Donohue

VISN 15 Cindy Heimsoth, Janice Stevens

VISN 16 Rebecca Gascoyne, alternate selection pending

VISN 17 Janeth Del Toro, Lynne Pompetti

VISN 18 Denise Rhodes, Gladys Benavente

VISN 19 Alana Jacobs, Jacqueline McCormick

VISN 20 Jonathan Wolman, Valarie O'Meara

VISN 21 Benita Morris, Lynn O'Brien

VISN 22 Roberta McCoy, Elissa Brown

VISN 23 Sally Watson, Peter Mitchell

If you have issues, questions or haven't heard from your VISN representative contact :

APNAG Co-Chairs for APN Liaisons

[Rebecca.Waldon@va.gov](mailto:Rebecca.Waldon@va.gov) or [Julie.Marcum@va.gov](mailto:Julie.Marcum@va.gov)

### ***Current Issues of Interest to APN Liaison Representatives***

- APN task force formed to revise and expand the APN Orientation program on the APN COLLAGE web page. Task force members are Marie Mompoin, VISN 7, Alana Jacobs, VISN 19, Jan Jones, VISN 4, and Cindy Heimsoth VISN 15. This group will start presenting monthly updates on the conference calls.
- APN Pay and Award Issues— 2 presenters this year: Julie Brandt, CNE, Little Rock VA, spoke on ways of implementing a separate pay band in facilities for APNs and Kim Radant, CNE, Indianapolis VA, who spoke on locality pay as well as ways of rewarding APNs.
- NOVA and its benefits to APNs—presentation by Larry Lemos, APN pending
- Review of the American College of Physician's Position Paper regarding APNs in Primary Care
- Consensus Model for APN Regulation
- State Licensure and Prescribing Issues. LIP vs Non LIP and Credentialing, State to State Portability
- Peer Reviews, looking at Best Practice examples.

## **VHA Nurse Practitioner to Lead Largest Nursing Specialty Organization**

**Beth Hammer, MSN, RN, APRN-BC**, is the 2008-2009 president-elect of the American Association of Critical Care Nurses (AACN). She will assume the president role in July 2009. In this role she will be representing the interests of over 500,000 critical care nurses. She has been on the AACN board of directors since 2005, serving as secretary 2007-08. While on the board she has served on numerous committees, including the Nominating Committee, Strategic Thinking Committee, and Research Work Group. She is a past president and lifetime member of the Greater Milwaukee Area Chapter of AACN, and former member of the AACN Chapter Advisor Team, working with chapters in Michigan and Wisconsin.

Beth began her nursing career in 1986 (BSN, College of St. Teresa, Winona, MN) when she joined the nursing staff at Zablocki VA Medical Center, Milwaukee, WI. She honed her critical care skills in the MICU; later cross training to the Cardiac Cath Lab and Electrophysiology Lab. She completed her MSN at Marquette University, Milwaukee in 1997. Since 1998 she has worked in the Cardiology section as a certified adult nurse practitioner (NP). Her primary role is with the Electrophysiology (EP) Team. Beth also provides key leadership and oversight for the 23-Hour Chest Pain Evaluation Program.

Over the past year she has enjoyed traveling to various conferences speaking on the AACN Healthy Work Environment Standards and how implementation of the standards assures that patient safety outcomes are met. She also speaks on cardiac/ electrophysiology clinical topics.

With all the activity in her professional life, Beth truly enjoys down time at home with her 4-legged "boy", Toby, as well as relaxing with family and friends.

## **Board Certified– Advanced Diabetes Management (BC-ADM) “Why APNs should consider this Certification”**

By: Sharon A. Watts ND, RN-C, CDE

As advanced practice nurses, APNs have long understood the value of certification to expand one's scope of practice and ensure delivery of expert patient care. The current climate within VHA nursing is also embracing a milieu of advanced certification. A magnet status culture is sweeping our country with gusto. Magnet health care environments embrace evidence– based nursing practice and promote the strength and quality of their nurses. Receiving certification in your area of practice promotes quality and professionalism. The BC-ADM is an ANCC certification. This certification supports the concept of an advanced diabetes manager. According to the American Association of Diabetes Educators, certification shows your nursing peers, interdisciplinary colleagues and health care consumers that you are committed to maintaining the highest levels of practice knowledge and competence.

Diabetes is an escalating disease in this nation and is a major diagnosis in the Veteran's Health Administration. The treatment of diabetes and the complications associated with the disease is very costly financially and in resource allotment and use. The cost to the veterans when they have complications is immeasurable in terms of loss of quality of life issues.

Recently, Secretary Shinseki of the VHA called for a veteran-centric, results– oriented, and forward looking transformation within the VHA. What could be more forward looking than to enhance one's skills to meet the increasing epidemic of diabetes plaguing our country and our organization?

Certification demonstrates a robust diabetes knowledge base to provide veteran-centric care which can improve multiple diabetes performance measures.

VHA APNs should take the lead in the battle against diabetes and help delay or prevent complications that take an enormous toll on our veteran population.

The Office of Nursing Service is currently promoting the "Lets Get Certified Campaign " , this certification can make a difference in our veteran's care. The time to act is now.

For more information on the BC-ADM certification: <http://www.diabeteseducator.org/ProfessionalResources/Certification/BC-ADM>

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## ***VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System, Las Vegas: Denise Bartlett-Chekal NP, Receives Award for Service to Women Veterans***

Ms. Denise Bartlett-Chekal, MSN, FNP-BC, from the VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System in Las Vegas, Nevada received a special award for her dedication to women veterans at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual National APN Conference. The conference was held in Las Vegas in February 2009 at the Palms Hotel. The plaque award was presented to Ms. Bartlett-Chekal by Mr. Ron Norby, the VISN 22 Network Director.

Ms. Bartlett-Chekal was hired in 1993 as the Women's Veteran Program Manager (WVPM) and as a Nurse Practitioner to develop the Women's Health Program in Las Vegas. During the development, Ms. Bartlett-Chekal had numerous roles and duties. She chaired and served on the station's Women Veterans Health Committee. Her numerous duties included patient advocacy, and acting as a liaison to women veteran service organizations (VSO). She spoke at numerous VSO meetings regarding the women's program during the development and growth of the program.

The Women's Clinic in 1993 consisted of one exam room with one part-time nurse in a small ambulatory care clinic. Ms. Bartlett-Chekal developed two comprehensive proposals regarding a new Women's Health Care Clinic which allowed the women's program and clinic to grow over the next decade. Through her leadership and expertise, the women's clinic has grown to include 3 primary care providers, 3 nursing staff, two part time gynecologists and a medical clerk. The Women's Health Clinic is located in a designated space with a separate waiting room for women veterans. The clinic offers comprehensive primary and women's specialty care.

Ms. Bartlett-Chekal was also the Lead WVPM for Network 22 from 2005-2008. She developed the network's business plan for Women's Health Enhancement funding in 2008. This plan provided funding for much needed updates and additional equipment for the network's women's clinics.

She stepped down as the WVPM in January 2009 when the position became a full-time position. The role of the WVPM has become much more active due to many returning women veterans and a full-time position is necessary to perform all the required new duties.

As a nurse practitioner, Ms. Bartlett-Chekal, provides clinical care across the health care continuum with an emphasis on disease prevention and health promotion. She promotes outreach within the medical center and community. She is regarded as a consultant in women's health for colleagues and students. Educating students and trainees about the concerns of women veteran patients plays a large part in her professional life.

According to many letters and one-on-one conversations, Ms Bartlett-Chekal's patients regard her as a strong advocate for Women Veterans. She remains a clinical champion in women's health and will continue as the Team Leader in the Women's Health Clinic in Las Vegas. She is also actively participating in the development of the new comprehensive women's health clinic for the new medical center in Las Vegas. The new hospital is due to be completed in 2012.



Denise Bartlett-Chekal receiving award for her dedication to Women Veterans from Ron Norby, VISN 22 Network Director At APN Conference in Las Vegas

## APN NEWS

### **Joan Galbraith, NP, accepts post as Women's Veterans Program Manager at Durham, NC VAMC**



#### **VISNs 5 & 6 APNAG Representative**

Joan Galbraith, NP, VISN 5&6 APNAG representative, is the new Women Veterans Program Manager at Durham, NC. She previously worked with the Spinal Cord Injury Team and will miss those folks. The new position will give her the opportunity to work with Women Veterans, and be a part of planning for the growth of services for Women at Durham.



### **Marsha Oliver, VISN 3 APN, NOVA Poster Presentation**

Marsha Oliver, APN, who is employed at VA New Jersey Health Care System, presented a poster in New Orleans at the NOVA annual convention on "Addressing Caregiver Burden", April 24, 2009.

Marsha is a member of the APN Council. She has also presented a poster presentation, entitled "Disarmament: Implications on Global Health" at the United Nations in New York City on June 9, 2009.

Abstract of Poster Presentation: "Addressing Caregiver Burden"

In 2004, approximately 44 million Americans provided unpaid care to a family member, friend or neighbor. These caregivers represented an estimated 22.9 million households (21% of all U.S. households). The estimated cost of unpaid care was recently estimated to be \$375 billion and continues to increase exponentially.

The objectives of this poster presentation were to define care giving, identify who are caregivers, review the demographics and cost of care giving, discuss the impact of care giving, educate the audience on identifying signs and symptoms of caregiver distress and how to utilize available resources to minimize caregiver burden. Resources were distributed to audience.

### **Aaron Schneider, VISN 3 APN, Selected as New Jersey APN of 2009**

*VA APN Aaron Schneider of the VA New Jersey Health Care System receiving plaque commemorating his selection as New Jersey Advanced Practice Nurse of 2009 from Kathi Burkhand, MSN, APN*

Aaron is active in the APN Liaison group representing VISN 3.

He is considered an expert in pain management as well as integrating technology at the bedside.

In addition to the above accomplishment, Aaron presented to the American College of Nurse Practitioners National Conference - "The Differential Diagnosis Using Palm Based Software and the Chronic Pain Patient" in Nashville, TN on October 30, 2008.

This presentation focused on navigating Merck Medicus and Epocrates Palm based software for use caring for the chronic pain patient. Aaron used a case study approach to pain management highlighting Ankylosing Spondylitis and Diabetic Neuropathy.



## **Office of Nursing Service Clinical Practice Program**

Christine Engstrom, PhD, CRNP, AOCN presented the **Office of Nursing Service Clinical Practice program (CPP)** at the February 2009 VA APN conference in Las Vegas.

The CPP's purpose is to provide guidance on clinical nursing practice and to support field-based operations and organizational priorities. The CPP is composed of a steering committee and Clinical Nurse Advisers who chair their respective field advisory committees (FACs). There are 7 FACs with 87 nursing members across the country. The FACs are:

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<b>Cardiovascular</b>	<b>Mental Health</b>	<b>Metabolic Syndrome/Diabetes</b>	<b>Oncology</b>
<b>Perioperative</b>	<b>Geriatrics/Long Term Care</b>	<b>Polytrauma/Rehab/SCI</b>	

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The Clinical Nurse Advisers who chair these FACs serve as resources for providing nursing input, help identify the need for additional nursing expertise as necessary and champion national program initiatives. They collaborate with other VA Central Office Programs as well.

Field Advisory Committee members represent nursing at all levels in their particular field of expertise and interest. Their charge is to identify and develop recommendations for :

- Evidence Based Practice ( EBP)
- Best practice, practice guidelines, standards of patient care and policy guidance
- Staff and patient/ caregiver training and educational priorities
- Support tools for documentation, references, etc
- Research agenda for clinical inquiries
- Publications, dissemination of best practices
- Potential oversight functions for the field

Threads that run throughout the CPP Structure are prevention, pain management, patient education, Advanced Practice Nursing, research, VANOD/IT and the VA National Nursing Strategic Plan.

### **Outcomes for CPP:**

- Standardized practice and coordinated advisory process for other program office initiatives
- Spread of innovation with VHA and VA healthcare facilities
- Dissemination of best practices aligned with national strategic initiatives
- Assisting in development of metrics that complement national performance measures and monitors
- Development and evaluation of nursing-sensitive indicators, care paths and EBP standards.

Each FAC has developed and identified specific outcomes for their specific committee.

### **Future plans for the CPP are:**

- Evaluation of the program in the fall of 2009.
- Development of a strategic plan for 2010 by identifying future goals/objectives
- Development of additional FACs.