Faculty and Students Have Support From the American Association of Nurse Practitioners

By AANP Staff

The American Association of Nurse Practitioners® (AANP) is here to provide nurse practitioners (NPs) — and those studying to become NPs — with resources and opportunities designed to help you succeed. To fully explore the perspectives of individuals attending or teaching, AANP spoke with an NP student and an associate teaching professor. Read on to hear from Joelle Fathi, DNP, RN, ARNP, CTTS, FAAN, about the importance of continuing education (CE) for NP students and faculty and ways to combat fatigue. Next, Katie Fitzgerald Jones, BSN, MSN, APN — a 2022 AANP Scholarship recipient — shares how AANP opportunities and mentorships have helped her excel as an NP student.

Joelle Fathi is a practicing NP, the chief healthcare delivery officer at the GO2 Foundation for Lung Cancer and a program director and associate teaching professor at the University of Washington. Fathi believes one of the strengths of the NP role is an emphasis on lifelong learning, which is enhanced by CE activities and the opportunity for NPs to share their knowledge with students. “The sooner we lean into these options around teaching, clinical work, leadership and research, the sooner we will have a diversified portfolio and will enjoy a really full career,” Fathi states. NP students and faculty have unique challenges, notes Fathi, in that “many of our students have been working on the front lines of clinical care during the pandemic. There is a lot of fatigue and emotional trauma that occurred. Most of our students worked in acute and critical care units this whole time, and many are suffering from a level of post-traumatic stress disorder as a result.” To combat burnout, she advises: “We need to be patient with ourselves, and we need to support our patients [and colleagues] in being patient with themselves.”

Katie Fitzgerald Jones works as an NP in palliative care, is a PhD candidate at Boston College and cares for patients with substance use disorder, cancer and other serious illnesses. Receiving a 2022 AANP Scholarship has been very useful in continuing her education, Jones told AANP. “A lot of my research is around what advanced practice nurses bring to patient encounters, particularly in patients with serious illness and substance use disorders,” she explains. “Having support and mentorship through an organization like AANP — putting out the best literature and giving the most support to NPs providing clinical care — gives me the confidence to grow my research.” Jones comes from a family of nurses, but even with this pedigree she encounters the same difficulties faced by any student, such as work-life balance and prioritizing wellness. “I think one thing that I’ve had to work pretty hard on is continuing to live and enjoy my life despite this challenging phase,” she says. Jones offers this advice to support the success of her fellow students: “Find mentors who bring out the best in you and mentor you as your whole self.”

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way NPs and NP students experience their education, as traditional classroom instruction is supplemented by remote learning. Technological advances have improved the accessibility and quality of nursing education, with innovations like simulation labs providing hands-on experience for learners. With robust academic programs and advanced CE opportunities, the future is bright for NPs. This year, U.S. News ranked the NP role as the best health care job — and second best job overall — in the country. AANP is here to assist you throughout your educational and professional journey by connecting you to a diverse NP community and by providing valuable resources and opportunities that will support your success.
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Celebrating Nurse Practitioner (NP) Leaders During National NP Week

By AANP Staff

Held annually, National NP Week celebrates the exceptional work of NPs across the country and serves to inform policymakers of the benefits patients experience when they have full and direct access to NP-delivered health care. This year, Nov. 13-19, the American Association of Nurse Practitioners® (AANP) is celebrating NP Week by highlighting all the ways NPs rise to meet the needs of their patients. You are invited to share your story with AANP for possible use during NP Week and beyond.

During these unprecedented times, NPs have served as vital leaders in their places of practice and communities. NPs treat their patients with compassion, provide person-centered care and continually expand their professional knowledge — often while advocating for the advancement of the NP role. A few remarkable NPs are highlighted below.

According to Nancy J. Sharp, MSN, RN, FAAN, for whom the AANP Sharp Cutting Edge Award was named, “If you want to make a strong impact, such as influencing policy or legislative changes, you must join an association. Numbers count. When more individuals join the group, the group has more power and strength.”

Within local, state and national organizations, NP leaders harness the collective voices of their fellow practitioners to organize, enrich and advocate for NPs everywhere.

Such is the case for Jennifer Wilbeck, DNP, APRN, FAAN, FAANP. Wilbeck’s position as an NP advocate helped establish the first dual emergency NP (ENP) program in the U.S. She has since become a driving force in standardizing ENP education — hosting lectures across the country and heading the ENP program at Vanderbilt University. For all her outstanding work leading the way to standardize ENP education and ensure excellence in emergency health care, Wilbeck was inducted as an AANP Fellow in 2016.

Beyond serving their communities and organizations, many NPs are executives who bring innovations to health care systems. One of those professionals is Michelle Edwards, DNP, FACHE, FAANP. Edwards works as the chief experience officer (CXO) for Providence Health Care Systems, where she leverages nearly 25 years of health care experience to promote compassionate, high-quality health care for vulnerable populations. Through their leadership, NPs like Edwards have helped develop new health care delivery models in some of the largest health systems in the country. This leadership and commitment to quality exemplifies how NPs are shaping the future of patient-centered health care.

Every day, NPs stand together and advocate for their patients and their colleagues. AANP is proud to be The Voice of the Nurse Practitioner® and stand up for the right of patients to have full and direct access to the health care provider of their choice. By advocating for Full Practice Authority at the state level and for important federal issues, NPs across the country have established themselves as role models for their fellow health care professionals and are leading positive changes in their own communities.

AANP California South State Liaison Beth Haney, DNP, FNP-C, FAANP, FAAN, has led the way in her city of Yorba Linda, California. As current city councilwoman and former mayor of Yorba Linda, Haney serves her community with the goal of promoting communication, health and safety and increasing awareness of homelessness.

To learn more about National NP Week, visit the AANP website, where you may also download the 2022 NP Week Resource Guide — including the NP Week proclamation — and view the NP Week proclamation map to see which states have already submitted proclamations signed by elected officials.
End Overdose Stigma and Increase Patient Access to Care

By Alex Fernandez, BA, AANP Content Marketing Specialist

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there were an estimated 107,622 drug overdose deaths in the U.S. during 2021, an increase of nearly 15% from the 93,655 deaths estimated in 2020. The true impact of overdose — and the ongoing opioid epidemic — stretches far beyond these numbers. It dramatically alters the mental health and well-being of victims’ families and communities. Now more than ever, nurse practitioners (NPs) play a critical role in helping curb the crisis of opioid use disorder (OUD) and other substance use disorders (SUDs).

On October 26, 2017, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) declared a nationwide public health emergency (PHE) to address the opioid crisis. At that time, data from the CDC showed that more than 140 Americans were dying from overdose every single day, with 91 of those deaths stemming from opioid use. The growing opioid epidemic and related increase in OUD have been a catalyst for this rise in overdose deaths. In 2020, opioids were involved in 68,630 overdose deaths — 74.8% of all drug overdose deaths. While prescription opioids and heroin were the most prevalent causes of overdose in 1999 and 2010 respectively, the most recent spike in overdose deaths has been attributed to synthetic opioids, such as illicitly manufactured fentanyl.

All SUDs impact an individual’s physical wellness and mental health. However, the stigma surrounding SUD often keeps those in need of treatment from seeking the help they need. To reduce stigma and boost patient access to SUD care, it’s important to increase awareness of SUD as a disease that can happen to anyone.

As an NP, you can make a positive difference by reminding your patients and community members that help is within reach and informing them of services, such as the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) National Helpline, that offer confidential, free and round-the-clock information for individuals with SUD or other mental health challenges and their family members. In 2020, Congress also designated the new dialing code 988 to be operated through the existing National Suicide Prevention Lifeline for individuals who are struggling or in crisis.

NPs first obtained temporary authority to receive a Drug Addiction and Treatment Act of 2000 waiver (DATA-waiver) in order to prescribe medication-assisted treatment (MAT) for OUD in the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act of 2016 (CARA). Recognizing the importance of NPs fighting the opioid epidemic, in 2018 Congress then made this authority permanent in the SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Act. Since first obtaining the authority to prescribe MAT in CARA, NPs have been critical to increasing patient access to MAT across the U.S. More recent guideline changes regarding the treatment of OUD now enable NPs to treat up to 30 patients with MAT without meeting all of the requirements for a DATA-waiver, and to treat up to 100 patients in the first year and up to 275 patients in subsequent years for NPs (and other qualified practitioners) who undergo the required training and receive their DATA-waiver.

The impact NPs with MAT waivers have is most strongly felt in rural communities, which lack the services and OUD treatment facilities that are more prevalent in non-rural areas. According to research published in Health Affairs, after the passage of CARA, NPs (and PAs) became the first-waivered clinicians in 285 rural counties covering 5.7 million residents. With fewer health care providers and facilities in these rural areas to diagnose and treat patients with OUD, NPs are a vital force for positive change.
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