

AAACN Holds Telehealth Visioning Meeting

On Saturday, August 4, 2007, the AAACN Board of Directors, conducted a telehealth visioning meeting. Invited telehealth leaders, and senior staff met at the AAACN National Office in Pitman, New Jersey for an all-day meeting to discuss the mega question: "What is AAACN's role in the future of telehealth nursing practice?" The meeting validated the role of telehealth as a vital component of the ambulatory care nursing specialty.

In preparation for this important meeting, the Board worked with the Telehealth Nursing Practice Special Interest Group (TNP SIG) to design a telehealth survey which was distributed to 1940 AAACN members via e-mail. 243 members completed the survey and the data were compiled as background information for the meeting. The survey results will be published in the November/December issue of *Viewpoint* and on the AAACN Web site.

The Board also solicited recommendations from the TNP SIG members for telehealth industry leaders to invite to the meeting. The following individuals attended the visioning meeting:

Board of Directors:

President	Charlene Williams, BSN, RNC, BC, MBA
President-Elect	Karen Griffin, MSN, RN, CNAA
Treasurer	Kitty Shulman, MSN, RN,C
Secretary	Belinda Doherty, BSN, RN, MBA, CPUR
Directors:	Assanatu "Sana" Savage, LCDR, USN
	Marianne Sherman, MS, RN, C
	Nancy Spahr, MS, RN-BC, MBA, CNS

Guests:

Liz Greenberg, PhD, RN,C
Carondelet Medical Group
Nancy Jay, BSN, RN-BC
Executive Director, American Healthways
Cheryl Magnusson, RNC
Health line Educator, Evergreen Healthcare
Lisa Monteleone, BSN, RN
VP Clinical Operations, Intellicare
Carol Rutenberg, RN, C-BC, MNSc
President, Telephone Triage Consulting

Senior Staff

Cynthia Nowicki Hnatiuk, EdD, RN, CAE

Executive Director

Patricia Reichart
Association Services Manager

Facilitator

Jean Frankel
Principal Partner, Tecker Consultants, L.L.C.

The group began the discussion using a process known as Knowledge-Based Decision Making. In using this model, four distinct questions were presented to the group: (1) *What do we currently know about the needs, wants and preferences of our AAACN members?* (2) *What do we know about the current and evolving dynamics of our profession relevant to this decision?* (3) *What do we know about the strategic position and internal capacity of our organization relevant to this decision?* (4) *What are the ethical implications of our choices relevant to this decision?*

Discussion regarding the first question focused on the results of the telehealth survey and the demographics of the AAACN membership. As the group moved into the second question, members of the TNP SIG and the invited industry leaders provided the board with invaluable insight into the future of telehealth and telehealth nursing practice. The discussion included the implications of the National Certification Corporation's recent announcement to discontinue offering the Telephone Nursing Practice Certification Exam.

In the afternoon, Jean Frankel led the participants in a lively discussion of potential choices of strategies to answer the mega question. Everyone was invited to list the advantages and disadvantages of each identified action strategy. The process and discussion were exciting, although challenging at times. Trends began to emerge and certain strategies appeared to have more advantages than disadvantages. Following the all-day visioning meeting on Saturday, the Board met on Sunday to review all the information as well as each of the identified strategies.

Because of the complexity of this issue, the Board decided that it needed more time to devote to identifying the most viable strategies before releasing their plan for answering the mega question: "What is AAACN's role in the future of telehealth nursing practice?" The Board of Directors is very grateful for the TNP SIG members and telehealth industry leaders who gave their time to assist AAACN in planning and guiding this important initiative

Follow Up Board Actions

As a result of the visioning meeting and further discussion, the board worked diligently and crafted its vision statement for telehealth as follows:

Telehealth will be recognized as an integral part of ambulatory care and AAACN will be the industry leader for telehealth nursing practice.

The AAACN board, as well as other industry leaders, recognizes telehealth as an important component of ambulatory care practice. Most registered nurses who work in ambulatory care are involved in telehealth, from talking with patients/families over the phone/email to remotely monitoring patients. Other RNs work exclusively in telehealth through large call centers, individual group practices, after-hour services, disease management programs, as well as other types of telehealth services.

In response to the National Certification Corporation's (NCC) decision to discontinue the telephone nursing exam by January 1, 2008, AAACN is pleased to report that it is pursuing discussions regarding telehealth certification with the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC).

ANCC supports the integral role of telehealth within the ambulatory nursing specialty. AAACN and ANCC have collaborated on the ambulatory care nursing certification exam since its inception. Since a component of the existing ambulatory care exam includes telehealth, ANCC is interested in working with AAACN to enhance the telehealth component of the exam. AAACN and ANCC participated in a conference call on Sept 17, 2007 to begin this important work.

We are pleased to be working with ANCC in enhancing the ambulatory exam so that it may become the appropriate option for all nurses working in ambulatory care, including telehealth nurses. Enhancing the telehealth component of the ambulatory exam is in concert with AAACN's telehealth vision of telehealth nursing being an integral part of ambulatory care.

While we know that telehealth nurses are concerned about NCC's decision to discontinue the exam specific to telehealth, we strongly encourage all telehealth nurses to take the ambulatory care exam which is broader in scope. Because telehealth nurses provide nursing care to patients who are in an ambulatory setting (eg, home), they must possess the knowledge and competencies to appropriately provide ambulatory care.

Ambulatory nursing certification, especially with the enhanced telehealth component, is the career credential for all ambulatory care nurses. A career credential will follow RNs throughout their careers in ambulatory care, and not be limited to a position they may hold today, such as in a call center.

Ambulatory certification is and will continue to be the gold standard credential for any nursing position within ambulatory care.

For more information, go to www.aaacn.org.