Finding a Professional Home

Because I’m a relative “old timer” in continuing education, I’ve enjoyed many conferences over the years. Today I consider the Professional Nurse Educators Group (PNEG) to be my professional home. There is quite a history behind the creation of the PNEG conference. Most of us can’t remember when continuing nursing education (CNE) and staff development weren’t part of our professional experience. That is because of the work of a dedicated group of educators upon whose shoulders our current CNE, staff development, and accreditation programs were built.

In the 1960s and as the 1970s appeared on the horizon, technological advances dramatically influenced the delivery of health care, as did a growing focus on community health services. Health promotion, heart surgery, transplant surgery, intensive care units, and new surgical techniques provided services that required advanced education in schools of nursing and for practicing nurses. There was a need for nursing leadership in teaching and in the planning and directing of nursing care. Much of this need was met through continuing education.

Thanks to the work of several faculty members in the Department of Nursing, University of Wisconsin Extension, Signe Cooper and Dorothy Hutchison among them, and Betty Gwaltney at the Medical College of Virginia–Richmond, School of Nursing, a national conference on continuing education for nurses was initiated. The first meeting was held in 1969 in Williamsburg, Virginia.

The national CE conference became the impetus for the birth of The Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing. Later, educators within this group created the National Nursing Staff Development Organization and subsequently its journal. Core group members provided the leadership, working tirelessly for the creation of a CE task force within the American Nurses Association (ANA); standards for CE and professional development; and our current American Nurses Credentialing Center accreditation system. These efforts resulted in the creation of ANA’s Council on Continuing Education, later the Council on Continuing Education and Staff Development, and lastly the Council for Professional Nursing Education and Development, which no longer exists.

When ANA changed its structure to a constituent member model, a group of us who considered the annual CE conference to be ours decided to continue the event. For a few years, the conference was co-provided

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Dr. DeSilets is a commissioner with the ANCC’s Commission on Accreditation. Views expressed by her are her own and are not representative of the Commission except as specifically noted.

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with ANA. In 2002, the name PNEG was born to provide an identity for the group. PNEG’s conference has traveled the country, with different sponsors hosting the annual fall event. Numbering for the PNEG conferences originates with the 1973 CE meeting held in Columbus, Ohio, to coincide with the inaugural meeting of ANA’s CE Council. By actual count, however, continuing educators have participated in an annual meeting for more than 40 years.

October brings PNEG’s 37th Annual National Conference, “Gateway to Innovation and Creativity in Nursing Education,” to Baltimore. PNEG is a virtual group dedicated to encouraging and supporting those involved in lifelong learning from schools of nursing, hospitals, and entrepreneurial and continuing nursing education programs to promote best practices in the delivery of nursing care. If you are fortunate enough to join us in Baltimore, I hope you will give thanks to our “forbearers.” They have helped to create the structures, standards, processes, and annual conference we enjoy today. PNEG is an outgrowth of their efforts. It serves as a networking community of professional nurse educators who exchange information and discuss common issues and ideas. You can learn more by visiting http://pneg.org.