Obesity: A Problem for All of Us

I almost leapt for joy when I saw the Triple Aim become the Quadruple Aim. The focus on the work environment is critical to keeping health care providers engaged with the mission and goals of any organization. If we want to make organizations healthy, we too must be so.

We no doubt recall the Triple Aim. The 2017 Triple Aim consists of three critical elements:

- Improving the patient experience of care (including quality and satisfaction).
- Improving the health of populations.
- Reducing the per capita cost of health care.

We still see Triple Aim referred to in much of today’s literature. Somewhat concerning is the fact that the Quadruple Aim has been around for 3 years and has yet to be fully recognized. The Quadruple Aim added the element improving the work life of health care providers, including clinicians and staff (Bodenheimer & Sinsky, 2014).

If we think about Magnet designation, we know, for decades now, that the organization must be healthy in order to provide quality care. Yes, the time from the first designation until the program started to grow was about a decade long. So, by 2024, we may see that the Quadruple Aim is the standard for optimizing the care people receive. What, you may ask, does all of this have to do with the issue of obesity?

The New England Journal of Medicine (GBD 2015 Obesity Collaborators et al., 2017) reported that 2.2 billion people or 30% worldwide qualified as overweight or obese. In the United States, that number of overweight or obese is 75% and among teens and young adults, we have the highest rates (13%).

Health care professionals operate clinics focused on weight reduction and conditions related to obesity. We participate in wellness programs such as this year’s nurse week theme: Year of the Healthy Nurse. Yet, we can visit any hospital or clinic that serves food and we do not find the healthiest choices available. Even in the places with healthy food, few operate cafeterias that serve healthy food for the night shift. We should not be surprised that nurses and other healthcare providers aren’t among the healthiest people. We don’t have time to leave patient care units sometimes, so leaving the building to access a source of healthy food is not realistic.

To further complicate the situation, some clinical units don’t have access to a refrigerator sufficiently large enough to permit staff to bring their own food; or access to a microwave oven may limit what can be brought to work. This situation was never a driving force behind the focus on the health care environment, but if we want to disrupt our trajectory, we need to think about the conditions we work in so that the totality of the environment is included.

What does all of this have to do with continuing education? The American Nurses Association and others provided numerous educational offerings this year about becoming healthier. We may also need to create the learning opportunity to see the environment in which we perform our work so we can create better options for translating research into actions that benefits us too. If this is the Year of the Healthy Nurse, we still have time to work with our or-
ganizations to create better food choices around the clock. Bon Appétit!

REFERENCES
