ADDRESSING QUESTIONS ABOUT REGISTERED NURSES IN PRIMARY CARE

To the Editor:
I was delighted to read your editorial titled Registered Nurses in Primary Care: What Will They Do? (Yoder-Wise) in the April 2017 issue of The Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing.

As a school nurse, I can address the questions you posed in the title and the body of your (Yoder-Wise, 2017) article.

What do nurses need to be able to challenge the system to function to their full scope? What do they need in order to refocus from acute care and triage to chronic care and care management? And once we clarify what we need to do for nursing, how do we articulate with the other professions to be sure that the person at the center of care is the one in need of care? (p. 147)

School nursing practice is highly autonomous, and school nurses practice independently and to the full scope of their license in an ambulatory care setting. We provide acute care, triage, and chronic care management for our students, who spend one third of their day in the schools for approximately 180 days of the year.

School nurses have successfully navigated not one but two disparate systems—education and health—to provide top-of-their-license care to their students. School nurses have coped with the challenges of sometimes being perceived as being orphans or boundary dwellers by our professional colleagues in both kindergarten through 12th grade education and by our nursing colleagues in the acute care setting. A result, and a definite downside of that, has been that our specialty practice and expertise have developed in relative isolation, and we have been largely invisible to nursing leaders outside of school nursing.

An excellent resource for anyone seeking more information about our role and specialty practice area is the recent document from our national professional organization—the National Association of School Nurses (NASN), titled The Framework for 21st Century School Nursing Practice (https://www.nasn.org/nasn/nasn-resources/professional-topics/framework).

We have incredible nursing leaders and educators in our specialty area, and we have so much to teach our nursing colleagues in acute care about successful professional nursing practice in the ambulatory setting! We help our students with chronic health conditions to successfully and independently manage their conditions. We have extensive experience in health teaching, preparing the citizens of tomorrow to lead healthier lives, with the ultimate goal of helping them avoid the development of chronic health conditions in the first place.

Dr. Yoder-Wise, your editorial (2017) has challenged me to reach out; we need to start a dialogue!

REFERENCE

Mary Beirne, LLM, BN, RN-BC, NCSN
White Plains City School District
White Plains, New York

The author has disclosed no potential conflicts of interest, financial or otherwise.
doi:10.3928/00220124-20170616-02