Trusting Nurses for 13 Years

The annual Gallup survey on trust in professions shows the public continues to rate nursing as the most honest and ethical. For the past 13 years, the public has voted nurses as the most honest and ethical profession in America in the Gallup poll. This year, 80% of Americans rated nurses’ honesty and ethical standards as “very high” or “high,” 15 points more than any other profession.

As more Americans gain access to health care under the Affordable Care Act, consumers increasingly are finding that they can rely on nurses to provide their preventive, wellness, and primary care services.

In addition, the American Nurses Association has completed a revision of its Code of Ethics for Nurses, a cornerstone document of the nursing profession that upholds the best interests of patients, families, and communities. The new Code was released in January 2015. The revision involved a 4-year process in which a committee received and evaluated comments on ethics issues from thousands of nurses.


Funding Alzheimer’s Research

The Alzheimer’s Association commends Congress for addressing Alzheimer’s disease in the fiscal year 2015 funding bill. By incorporating the Alzheimer’s Accountability Act (H.R. 4351/S. 2192), Congress has made a long-term commitment to elevating research funding. This bill will help ensure that future Congressional Alzheimer’s funding decisions will be guided by the professional judgment of National Institutes of Health (NIH) scientists as they strive toward the National Plan to Address Alzheimer’s Disease’s goal to prevent and effectively treat Alzheimer’s by 2025.

Introduced in April, the Alzheimer’s Accountability Act calls for the NIH to submit a Professional Judgment Budget for Alzheimer’s disease research each year, as well as a report that outlines research conducted on Alzheimer’s disease relative to milestones established under the National Alzheimer’s Plan.

The funding bill includes a $25 million increase for Alzheimer’s research, which comes on the heels of an unprecedented $122 million increase for Alzheimer’s research, education, outreach, and caregiver support in fiscal year 2014. Together,

Mobility Disabilities Among Older Adults

Approximately 40% of individuals 65 and older had at least one disability, according to a U.S. Census Bureau report from 2008-2012. Of 15.7 million individuals, two thirds say they had difficulty in walking or climbing. Difficulty with independent living, such as visiting a doctor’s office or shopping, was the second-most cited disability, followed by serious difficulty in hearing, cognitive difficulty, difficulty bathing or dressing, and serious difficulty seeing.

Although populous states, such as California, Florida, New York, and Texas, had the largest number of older adults with a disability, high disability rates were seen in Southern counties, especially in central Appalachia and the Mississippi Delta.

Highlights of the report include:
• More than one third of individuals 85 and older with a disability lived alone, compared with one fourth of those between ages 65 and 74.
• Women 65 and older were more likely than men 65 and older to have five of six types of disability included in the American Community Survey, especially ambulatory difficulty.
• Disability rates were lower for married older adults than for widowers or those in other categories of marital status.

these increases would bring annual federal funding for Alzheimer’s research to $591 million. However, scientists have stated accomplishing the goal of the National Alzheimer’s Plan will require a commitment of at least $2 billion per year.

There are currently more than 5 million Americans living with Alzheimer’s disease at a cost to the nation of $214 billion per year, according to the Alzheimer’s Association 2014 Alzheimer’s Disease Facts and Figures report. Those numbers are projected to increase to as many as 16 million by 2050, costing the nation $20 trillion over the next 40 years.

The Association now encourages all parties—the House of Representatives, the Senate, and the Obama Administration—to ensure enactment of this critical Alzheimer’s legislation and the research funding within the bill.


Improving Quality of Life for Older Adults with Arthritis and Muscle/Joint Pain

A new study found that older adults experienced less pain, reduced stiffness, and less fatigue after participating in a hospital-based exercise program.

A total of 1,400 adults participated in various exercise programs at the hospital during the course of the study, which began in 2011. The low-cost classes, led by certified instructors, included pilates mat, therapeutic yoga, yoga-lates (i.e., a combination of yoga and pilates), t’ai chi, and dance. Classes met once per week and were open to the general public.

Most participants in the exercise program were age 75 or older. Thirty-six percent were between ages 75 and 84, 31.2% were older than 85, 24.8% were between ages 65 and 84, and 8% were younger than 65. Ninety-two percent were women.

A total of 204 individuals completed questionnaires both before and after finishing the program. Survey results covered September 2011 to July 2014.

The study found that after taking the classes, fewer participants reported experiencing a high level of muscle/joint pain from their condition (56% before vs. 47% after the program).

Eighty-three percent of participants indicated a reduction in stiffness, 82% said they believed their balance improved, and 67% said they experienced less fatigue as a result of taking part in the program.

Health outcomes were also related to the type of exercise class participants chose, with the greatest reduction in muscle/joint pain reported by those who took t’ai chi.


The Costs of Alzheimer’s Caregiving

Approximately one half (42%) of family members caring for a loved one with Alzheimer’s disease or other dementia spend ≥$20,000 per year on caregiving, according to a new Caring.com report. Caregiving expenses include out-of-pocket costs for assisted living, professional in-home caregivers, medications and medical bills, incontinence and wandering products, transportation, and more.

Of the 42%, 33% spend ≥$30,000 per year on Alzheimer’s caregiving; 8% do not know how much they spend on caregiving.

Twenty-two percent of family caregivers say that caring for a loved one with Alzheimer’s disease or dementia has put them in debt. But Alzheimer’s disease and dementia caregiving has more than monetary effects:

• Ninety-seven percent of family caregivers say their personal relationships have suffered or ended as a result of caring for a loved one with Alzheimer’s disease or dementia.

• Seventy-six percent say their emotional well-being has declined as a result of Alzheimer’s disease or dementia caregiving, and 55% say their physical health has declined.

• Fifty-six percent of caregivers have had to quit their jobs or say their career has been negatively affected by their caregiving duties.

Typically, family caregivers for Alzheimer’s disease and dementia patients spend more money and more time than other family caregivers.