

## Partner Up: Building Work Partnerships with Physicians

### *Message from the President*



The importance of teamwork and collaborative practice in healthcare has been highlighted for the last two decades. The Institute of Medicine's Keeping Patients Safe affirms that leadership modeling of collaborative behaviors sets the stage for nurse-physician communication, a key factor in quality and safety systems.

Partnerships are interdependent relationships in which people work together to achieve mutual goals. The success of a patient care unit, hospital or other health care setting can be strongly impacted by the partnership of those that lead the clinical and operational work.

Why should we have partnerships? Gallup Press published a landmark study of partnerships, Power of 2, in 2009. They purport that humans are made for collaborating; that the best work is done through team effort. We all believe that "two heads are better than one". Having a collaborator changes and enhances our perception of reality and produces better solutions.

Agreement on mutual goals is the foundation for a nurse leader-physician leader partnership. This takes concurrence on purpose and outcomes and clarifying and accepting the role of each partner.

Relationships are built on trust and respect. Physician and nurse leaders don't always understand each other's job. Spending time learning what your partner's work life entails can enhance the partnership by developing respect for each other's work, clinical and leadership expertise.

Trust is built on honest communication and keeping commitments. Developing this type of relationship with a work partner takes time and constant attention.

Two heads are better than one, but not if they don't communicate. Communicating on a regular basis is an important feature of successful partnerships. It's not just the content, but the contract that the communication creates. The opportunity to think out loud with a work partner gives both the chance to broadly explore problems and opportunities.

A key to building a strong work partnership is using the complementary strengths of the partners. Knowing and accepting each other's work personality, strengths and weaknesses, and capitalizing on them, is elemental to building a great partnership.

A new program, The Interprofessional Leadership Institute, co-sponsored by the Virginia Hospital and Healthcare Association, the Virginia Nurses Association, the Virginia Action Coalition and the Virginia Society of Medicine, will launch in October. Stay tuned for news on this course opportunity for work teams to develop knowledge and skills and collaborate on a team capstone project over a several month period.

Having a successful work partnership enhances both partners' power and influence. Virginia nurse leaders need to be primed to develop work partnerships with physicians and other team members that will benefit patient care and our professions.

## A Personal Professional Practice Model for Nurse Leaders

Many nurses across the Commonwealth of Virginia are fortunate to work in settings that have formally crafted unique professional practice models to help define and guide nursing care in that setting. Professional practice models typically describe how nurses in an organization communicate, collaborate, practice, and develop professionally. These models are used to describe the structures, processes, and values of nursing often through a visual or graphic representation to help illustrate the dynamic relationships of the complex roles of nursing. One only has to search online to see a myriad of these models. Typically seen are images of overlapping circles of influence, compasses guiding the way, Gordian knots reflecting the complexity of the nurse's relationships, Parthenon's of strength and values, or elemental aspects of nature.

Virginia nurse executives and leaders could apply this concept to their own personal role by considering what an individually designed practice model would consist of for their leadership positions. A moment spent scanning the social media outlets or standing near the closest coffee cart in our hospitals allows us to hear verbalized worries of increasing patient and family expectations, concern over growing societal incivility and violence, and negative financial forecasting that paints a cloud of apprehension over our healthcare settings. While, remaining optimistic and forward thinking in these times feels like a large task; we have a choice as leaders to reconfirm attitudes and direction. Perhaps this opportunity includes crafting new leadership practice models for ourselves. We need to be strong leaders who are willing to challenge the status quo.

Our long standing prototype patterns used for communication, collaboration, and practice may need to be recast. This requires thoughtful contemplation of new actions from the leadership genre of late including hardwiring resiliency, identifying one's own self-efficacy, use of evidence-based practices, and the art of being present in the moment. If we were to draw our own practice models would it capture these elements for success? Ask yourself to consider what your visual representation of your own model for success as leader would look like? What is the base of your personal model? What components might you include? How do you visualize advocacy and personal integrity for yourself? I would like to think my model would resemble a Sphinx perhaps. These are mythical creatures with the head of a human, the body of a lion and the wings of a bird. I hope to apply intellect, courage and ability to see above the sands to our current healthcare challenges and if the winds and times and have worn off a few of my edges that would be alright by me.

We have the challenge in front of us to maintain an adequate healthcare workforce to meet the changing needs of our population in an outcome driven setting. As the world and modern medicine change, nursing has a responsibility to evolve in parallel to improve, or even maintain, a standard of excellence in practice including our leadership actions. Take up your colored pencils and draw a new leadership practice model for yourself. Our nurses and patients are counting on you.

*Susan Winslow, DNP, RN, NEA-BC  
VONEL Board Member  
VONEL Member since 2013  
System Director of Professional Practice  
Sentara Healthcare  
Williamsburg, VA*



## Spotlight on **INOVA HEALTH SYSTEM**

Inova Health System is located in Northern Virginia and is the Washington, DC, region's premier healthcare provider, nationally recognized for clinical excellence and outstanding patient care. More than 16,000 employees – including 5,000 nurses – meld compassion and innovation to deliver the best possible medical care to more than 2 million people annually from the region and beyond.

Inova's comprehensive network comprises hospitals, outpatient services, primary and specialty care practices, and health and wellness initiatives. The health system is also home to the internationally recognized Inova Heart and Vascular Institute, Inova Translational Medicine Institute, and the Inova Dwight and Martha Schar Cancer Institute. Inova is a global leader in the groundbreaking science of genomics and the new era of personalized health, which uses a person's genetic makeup to predict and prevent disease. Researchers work to bring new treatments to the patient's bedside safely and quickly, advancing clinical innovation in the community and beyond.

For four years in a row, *US News & World Report* has ranked Inova Fairfax Hospital the number one hospital in the Washington area, and all five of Inova's hospitals are recognized in at least one specialty or common core ranking. Collectively, Inova hospitals hold 18 Joint Commission accreditations and Gold Seals of Approval for excellence in stroke care, heart care, orthopedic surgery, neonatal intensive care and palliative care. Three Inova hospitals are Magnet<sup>®</sup>-recognized.

Inova's nurses are led by Maureen Swick, RN, MSN, PhD, NEA-BC, and Chief Nurse Executive. Leading more than 5000 nurses at multiple service sites, Maureen is responsible for nursing practice, education, research, strategy and operations across the Inova system. As a strong nurse advocate and leader, she is committed to transforming the nursing profession by ensuring that Inova's nurses practice to the full extent of their education and training, and continuously enhance their expertise through seamless academic progression. She has special expertise in designing and optimizing clinical operations to drive business performance, strategic planning, organizational development, transformational leadership and critical decision-making.

Maureen was elected 2015 president-elect of the AONE Board of Directors for a one-year term. She will become AONE president serving a one-year term beginning January 1, 2016. As president, Maureen will lead a membership organization of more than 8,700 nurse leaders whose strategic focus is excellence in nursing leadership.

In today's complex healthcare environment, nursing excellence is the key to move forward with confidence. Inova's culture of nursing excellence epitomizes the founders' vision to create a healthcare system that offers every patient exceptional quality, care and outcomes.



*Submitted by Patricia Mook, MSN, RN, NEA-BC  
Inova Health System  
VONEL Member*

## Upcoming Scholarship

# AONE Conference

*The Virginia Organization of Nurse Executives and Leaders offers a **\$1500** Scholarship to help defray the costs of AONE conference attendance. Scholarship application will be made available in October. Winner of scholarship will also receive a complimentary ticket to the VONEL Spring Conference in order to present lessons learned from the AONE Conference.*

*Additional information and brochure can be found [here](#)*

## 2015 Fall Conference

Keynote Speaker:

Dr. Bernadette Melnyk

**Building and Sustaining an Evidence-Based Practice Culture and Environment:**

*A Key Strategy for Nurse Leaders to Reach the Triple Aim in Healthcare*



Friday, September 25, 2015

Virginia Beach, VA

Click [here](#) for brochure and registration info.