

A Message From the Chief Nurse

Nurses,

Summer is almost over and I hope that everyone has had time to relax in the sun. I hope everyone was aware that the US Public Health Service turned 210 years old, celebrating its birthday 16 July. Here are some updates to keep you informed.

Readiness & Preparedness

Your Readiness is critical to accomplishing our mission, especially in this hurricane season. We are deploying nurses in response to Hurricane Gustav. I encourage all of you to work to maintain your own basic ready qualification status and to assist your colleagues as well. We still need to reach our 100% goal!!!

Our humanitarian efforts continue. The USS BOXER completed its mission on 27 June and the USNS MERCY arrived in Timor Leste on 12 July. Missions are underway both ashore and aboard ship. The USS KEARSARGE began its mission in early August.

The Role of Public Health Nurses in Emergency Preparedness and Response: A Position Paper of the Association of State and Territorial Directors of Nursing-was published in the journal *Public Health Nursing* in the July/August 2008 issue, Vol. 25, No. 4, pp. 353-361. This issue also features a white paper for public health nursing educators.

Policy Update

Personnel Operations Memorandum (POM) 08-005 Special Uniforms for Flight Status, POM 08-006 Uniforms for Officers Deployed with Navy, CC23.8.3 Retirement (30Years), and (POM) 08-007, Promotions Eligibility Criteria dated 11 August 2008, were posted on the CCMIS Web site <http://dcp.psc.gov/>. Other policy completions and pending policies are referenced at <http://dcp.psc.gov/eccis>.

Deployment Readiness policies and uniform wear policies are currently under review.

Transformation

The focus on recruitment and growth of the Commissioned Corps continues and our workforce is currently **6190** officers strong. Many civilian nurses are choosing to convert to the Corps. I encourage nurse officers to share the benefits of “marching in the army” of the Surgeon General with your civilian and tribal nurse colleagues. The 12th class of the Officer’s Basic Course graduated and we now have over 450 officers who have completed this basic training and evaluated it as a positive learning experience. We continue to witness the value of this training in preparing our new generation of officers.

Nursing category representatives will be piloting the new billet process for the Corps. I want to recognize the stellar work completed by the Nursing Professional Advisory Committee (NPAC) and subcommittee members on this workgroup. After completion of the pilot, OCCO will prepare a strategy about an implementation and communication

plan for the new billet system. Thanks are extended to those nurses who will participate in the pilot.

A new look for PHS recruitment resources can be found on the website at www.usphs.gov. This includes the new recruitment campaign tagline “America’s Health Responders,” which is based on extensive audience research conducted with potential recruits. This logo does not replace the HHS logo or the PHS seal. Every officer is an ambassador and your efforts have achieved a **Nurse Category strength of 1435** We still need more nurses, so keep up the good recruiting work.

Leadership and Outreach

Although it seems like influenza (the flu) season is far off, we need to start now to increase awareness and encourage flu vaccination—especially among fellow healthcare workers. CDC reported that flu immunization compliance rates were 44% during the recent 2007-2008 vaccination season compared with 70% the previous season. Healthcare providers are at high risk for influenza and need to be protected with immunization. Start now to spread the word and encourage all healthcare providers to get the flu vaccine this fall. Remember to self-report the date of the annual influenza immunization in your OFRD database.

I had the opportunity to join the Surgeon General in a meeting with the leadership of the National Association of School Nurses (NASN). School nurses play a critical role in the protection of our youth’s health, including the prevention of childhood obesity. We encouraged the members of NASN to partner with their Regional Health Administrators (RHAs) from HHS to collaborate on program initiatives. The Surgeon General continues to be supportive of the importance of the role of nurses in keeping our Nation healthy.

I prepared an HHS University learning module on critical occupational competencies for nurses as part of the Office of Human Resources initiative to reduce the competency gap in mission critical occupations. This video addresses the application of diversity, decision making and results driven competencies to the nursing profession. It will be used as part of the Department’s talent management strategy. You will be getting an email from HHS about completing this short learning module. Stay tuned.

Career Development

Permanent promotion results are posted at <http://dcp.psc.gov/>. Congratulations to all those officers who achieved this career milestone. I look forward to working with these senior officers in furthering the mission of the U.S. Public Health Service.

Promotion benchmarks for 2009 are posted at <http://dcp.psc.gov/PY2009.aspx>.

Please plan to join the USPHS at this year’s AMSUS conference being held in San Antonio, TX from November 9-14. The USPHS has the honor of sponsoring the conference this year. For conference details and registration please visit www.amsus.org . The program agenda is strong and there are additional courses in leadership and preparedness offered in conjunction with the conference.

The World Health Organization (WHO) Reproductive Health Library (RHL) is an electronic review journal covering the field of sexual and reproductive health. RHL takes the best available evidence on sexual and reproductive health and presents it as practical actions for clinicians to improve health outcomes, especially in developing countries.

Check out their website at <http://www.who.int/reproductive-health/rhl/index.html>.

The Joint Commission warns that rude language and hostile behavior among health care professionals goes beyond being unpleasant and poses a serious threat to patient safety and the overall quality of care. To be more aware of this, please read the Alert on The Joint Commission website at:

http://www.jointcommission.org/SentinelEvents/SentinelEventAlert/sea_40.htm

Recognition

Congratulations to RADM Deborah Parham for her nomination as a fellow in the American Academy of Nursing and LCDR Faisal Aboul-Enein, who was selected as a Fellow of the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners. Congratulations are also extended to the many nurses who completed certifications and received local and national recognition for their service. All of our nurses are heroes

Comment

The summer Olympics have ended, but the struggle for excellence and perfection continue in the work that we all do. While athletes practice until they get it right, nurses work toward excellence until we can't get it wrong. Our goal is not a medal, but rather the improvement of health in the many lives that we touch. Thank you for your Olympian efforts each day. The glory and fame in our work is in the significant difference we make in creating a better today and an improved tomorrow for those we serve. You are all gold medalists!!!!

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