



SIGNificance

Issue 7

September 2011



Message from the Editor

Welcome to the 3rd issue of the Aged Care Nurses Special Interest Group Newsletter for 2011.

As you will be aware, this year has seen some major developments in the Aged Care Sector. The Productivity Commission's Inquiry into Caring for Older Australians handed down its Final Report on 28 June leading to much discussion within the industry and among nursing and care staff. The ANF has since launched its "AGED CARE CAN'T WAIT" campaign as a response to the Commission's recommendations. Thousands of postcards and emails have been sent to the Gillard Government urging it to make sure that the next budget is dedicated to alleviating the crisis the Aged Care sector is already experiencing. Full details of this campaign are available from the ANF (Vic Branch) website.

Another form of action has been to invite Members of Parliament to sign a Pledge of Support for the delivery of quality care with a number of MP's responding.

We were also fortunate to have the opportunity to join with the Nurses for Continence SIG in presenting a joint study day on the Saturday, 10 September for our members. This was

a great success with much positive feedback. Given the level of interest in this kind of activity, there is a strong possibility of another study day in the New Year. Please let us know what topics and issues you'd like to see presented with time set aside for discussion. This year saw the ACNSIG offer free membership for 1 year to new subscribers to the ANF. As a result our membership has grown enormously which we hope to retain. In order to be eligible for our CPD grants, have access to our Newsletter, online news, invitations, articles and study information, members must be financial from our anniversary date which is the 28 November. Cost of membership remains at \$30.00. Members are invited to our meetings held approximately 4 times a year with refreshments provided.

In this issue you will find updates on the BECAUSE WE CARE CAMPAIGN, CPD Grant information, ANSIG Action news and a report from Arlene Collins winner of a CPD grant who attended a conference in Spain earlier this year. Our very special feature will be artist and SIG member Susan Marsh's art project entitled *It Looks Good On Paper* now installed at ANF House.

Erica Kurec

AGED CARE NURSES

Special Interest Group ANF (Vic Branch)

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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Our Annual General Meeting will be held on Tuesday, 29 November 2011 at 11.15hrs at ANF House, 540 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne.

Refreshments will be served.

All welcome to attend.

Nominations are now being sought for the positions of Chairperson and Treasurer.

For further information, please contact ACN SIG Committee on:

Erica Kurec (Chairperson)
kurec@optusnet.com.au

Lorraine Andrew (Secretary)
stevlor79@hotmail.com

Because We Care Campaign

With the release of the final Productivity Commission report into aged care, the ANF has launched the next phase of its campaign to address the crisis in the aged care sector. In a media release, Lee Thomas ANF Federal Secretary said that “Whilst the PC report acknowledges there are workforce issues in aged care, it contains no tangible mechanisms on how to close the wages gap for the aged care workforce so residents can receive the quality care they deserve... It is inconceivable that the PC, after months of public hearings and submissions from nursing staff from the various states, fails to address the \$500 million required to close the wages gap for nurses and

activities which has been inviting Members of Parliament, Senators and key stakeholders across Australia to sign a Pledge of Support for the campaign’s agenda of reform. So far in Victoria we have attended morning teas at Gregory Lodge Flemington where Adam Bandt Federal Member for Melbourne signed a pledge, at Ralac Lionsbrae in Ringwood East with Mike Symon MP (Deakin), Senator Gavin Marshall at Bailly House, North Melbourne, Anna Burke MP (Chisholm) at her offices in Syndal and with Laura Smyth (pictured with Fran Dickinson, Di Lowden, Jenni Hopwood and Erica Kurec) at her offices in Berwick. Meeting these Members and having the opportunity to discuss with them issues we face each day in our care for the frail

The ANF and ACNSIG once again calls on participation from our members in this activity. Keep up to date with the campaign by logging onto www.becausewe care.org.au



AINs working in the sector. ... The PC recommends the timeframe of 3 to 5 years for a new statutory body to examine wages, but this is far too long”. Hence this next phase, titled “AGED CARE CAN”T WAIT”, staff, residents, family members and community members are called on to urge the Federal Government to “ensure that there is an injection of funding in the 2012 budget to fix the nursing shortage, close the wages gap and put the care back into aged care” Please check the ANF (Vic Branch) website for full details of how you can lend your support.

ACNSIG ACTION

Members of our group have taken part in another of the BWC campaign’s

aged has been interesting with our concerns listened to and hopefully taken on board. The Pledges that have been signed are on A1 size card and adorn the walls of the ANF offices.



Susan Marsh “It Looks Good on Paper”

Susan Marsh
Registered Nurse Div. 1
Visual Artist

As an experienced aged care nurse, I hold a passionate belief about the importance of maintaining an individual’s dignity in the delivery of care, despite the many challenges in providing high-quality aged care. I trained in the hospital system and graduated in 1973 as a Registered Nurse Div. 1 at the Whyalla and District Hospital in South Australia. I undertook post basic training in Psychiatric Nursing in NSW (1977), and then worked in Community Nursing in the Western Metropolitan Health Region in NSW (1980). It was then time to concentrate on raising my family in Melbourne. When I returned to NSW I worked in private aged care on a part-time basis, where I worked one-on-one with patients.

I returned again to Melbourne in 1990 and worked as an S.RN. Div. 1 through several nursing agencies, before working in some retirement lodges, and in home care with Southern Cross Victorian Aged Care (CACPS). Through my work with CACPS, I learned about the struggles frail older people face in remaining in their own homes, and their sheer determination to manage and not enter either hostel or residential aged care. You learn a lot from these situations, and it was a privilege to be part of that process. During this time I accompanied one of my clients at a fundraising fete for a church that provided a 30-bed high care residential aged care nursing home. I knew that this was where I wanted to continue my nursing career. I have been employed at this facility in Residential Aged Care since 1996. In 1997 I also worked a private residential aged care facility (for three years), then again in 2003 for a brief period.

In 2000 my father was diagnosed with lung cancer and my parents moved to Melbourne. I was able to support my Dad in the final years of his life, and to look after my Mum after Dad’s death in 2001. Mum lived independently with some complex health issues but was able to enjoy good quality of life. Mum had a mechanical fall and died three

days later on 16 November 2007, aged 83 years. I raised my concerns about the medical management of my Mum to the hospital. These were taken up and a full and lengthy inquiry occurred. It did not change what had happened for my Mum, but I hoped that it might prevent the situation happening to someone else’s elderly mother or father.

The most wonderful experiences in my nursing career have been in aged care. My love and respect for older people is part of who I am. My childhood was filled with time spent with my grandparents, elderly aunts and uncles. The storytelling that has come down through generations of my family continued with my Mum who became my storyteller in my recent art practices. My narrative-based practice is how I can give something back to the beautiful and frail older people residing in residential aged care. In my role as an aged care nurse, I support people in the later stages of their lives. Although residents might be losing physical strength and dealing with cognitive impairment, their spirits are generally strong.

The experience of caring for them has had a profound influence on my art practice. My art deals with issues of growing old and experiencing frailty that awaits nearly all of us. My art is informed by my lived experience of being a nurse dealing with these very issues. Frail older people are often invisible in our community and I hope my art helps provide them a public face. My art encourages audiences to think more deeply. These people are still living, and they deserve to live out full and happy lives in care.

My current work “It looks good on paper” explores the current state of aged care in Australia. It refers to tensions between documentation and the realities of providing care without the right mix of qualified nurses, care staff, and adequate staff ratios. In these conditions, the quality of care for some of the most vulnerable and frail older people is compromised. I assembled images which form a crucifix, deliberately suggesting the sacrificing of frail older people, their families and



Susan Marsh “It Looks Good on Paper” - continued

the nurses by the economic rationalisation of aged care providers and the federal government declining to adequately respond to this specialised sector. (It was only with the courage and generosity of 10 of my dear older friends, neighbours and the commitment of one wonderful RN. Div. 1, that I was able to bring this concept to a public audience.)

I support the ANF Campaign ‘Because We Care’ because our residents are human beings not numbers or statistics on paper. Families endure so much just in making the decision to place their loved ones in care, and from hereon their burden should not increase. Nurses are under stress, it is unsafe and totally unfair. Nurses by nature are charitable and caring human beings, but they are not a charity. Nurses work to support families and deserve a correct wage.

Research in aging is markedly diverging from aged care as is experienced by the older Australian

Solo Exhibition recipient Susan Marsh
2008 John Garratt Eastman Spiritual Art Award

It looks good on paper

4th - 29th May 2009



Combined Study Day with Nurses for Continence

Understanding Incontinence in the Elderly was held on Saturday, 10 September, at ANF House. The program included urinary tract infections in the elderly, nocturia, the effects of dementia and continence, nutritional considerations, bowel management and more. Presenters were both educational and inspirational, and comprised of Doctor's, O/T's, Dietitians, Research Nurses and Continence Nurses.

This was a really productive, informative day and enjoyed by all present. Approximately 60 nurses in total attended, 14 of those being ACNSIG members. The Aged Care Nurses Special Interest Group expresses appreciation to the Continence Nurses for having organised this in conjunction with ACNSIG.

Lorraine Andrew, Secretary.

Q&A – ABC

As advised, this program aired on Monday, 26 September at 9.30pm. The Minister for Health and Ageing, Mark Butler, appeared with Rob Oakeshott (Independent MP), Janet Albrechtsen (opinion columnist for The Australian), Helen Coonan (former Communications Minister), and William McInnes (actor).

ANF SIG members were provided with the link (www.abc.net.au/tv/ganda), and urged to contribute via several choices.

We hope that this program was accessed, and look forward to your feedback.

Lorraine Andrew, Secretary.

Continuing Professional Development Grants

ACNSIG offers 4 grants of \$250.00 each year for Continuing Professional Development of our members. Application forms are available from the ANF website. Round 2 applications close Monday, 31 October 2011.

Coming Up

Public Forum on AGEING TODAY – Different Perspectives on Growing Old.

Date: Thursday, 20 October 2011

Time: 5.30pm for 6pm start.

FREE EVENT

@ ZINC, Fed Square, Melbourne

RSVP bill.snaddon@lmcf.org.au or phone 9633 0025

**Set aside
Tuesday, 29
November 2011
for our Annual
General
Meeting to be
held at ANF
House at
11.15am**

AGED CARE NURSES

Special Interest Group
ANF (Vic Branch)

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Report from CPD Grant recipient, Arlene Collins International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics Intensive Course on Ageing held on Thursday, 30 June and Friday, 1 July 2011 in Barcelona, Spain

This was my first foray into an international conference and had the added bonus of allowing me to catch up with family living in Spain.

It was inspiring to be in such auspicious company and to be surrounded by like-minded people who are passionate about promoting wellness in ageing. All presentations were in English with some accents making it necessary to concentrate very hard on the subject matter. There were accompanying papers for most presentations and supporting slides and power point presentations were mostly in English. Lively workshop sessions followed most presentations.

Through networking I was able to establish a contingent of approximately ten Australians. Victoria, New South Wales, the Northern Territory and Western Australia were represented with occupations including a university lecturer, General Practitioners, Aged Care Nurses, an Occupational Therapist and a Dietitian.

Discussion centered on present and future research was most interesting especially the upcoming trials involving Vitamin D and Omega 3 and their implications in geriatrics.

The presentation on Psychiatric and Behavioural Symptoms in Alzheimer's and Other Dementias (Professor L Fitten) was most informative. His case study offered an insight into misdiagnosis of psychiatric illness versus increased behavioural disturbances in the elderly and highlighted the need for following the 'Treatment Decision Tree' to ensure all possible causes are investigated.

I also particularly enjoyed the presentation and workshop on frailty, sarcopenia and the prevention of frailty. The importance of promoting physical activity for older persons is a must to ensure healthy ageing.

As an aged care nurse attending the conference I was proud to acknowledge that we, from a nursing perspective, are providing care for our residents that is evidenced based and internationally recognised and accepted.

I would like to thank the Aged Care Nurses Special Interest Group for their support and encouragement and the grant that assisted me in attending the conference.

Yours in Aged Care Nursing

Arlene Collins

**We're on the web:
www.anfvic.asn.au**