

2014 AANP Health Policy Conference: Passionate, Powerful & Memorable

I was delighted to be the recipient of this year's Health Policy Scholarship affording me the opportunity to attend the AANP Health Policy Conference in Washington, DC. This was an opportunity to hear from our policy leaders and be a part of the grassroots advocacy to help move our professional issues forward. The conference was extremely well planned and over 200 NPs from all over the country were in attendance. While there were many wonderful speakers, I will highlight just a few that I believe can help each of us as individuals lead from where we stand as part of our grassroots efforts to advance our profession.

Pam Fielding and Vlad Cartwright, of SevenTwenty Strategies, a public affairs agency, spoke to us on the Power of Grassroots and Media. They recapped the recent ad campaigns that ran (see the AANP website) across the country in various media as part of AANP's effort to increase visibility of NPs. This highly successful campaign resulted in an increase from 1.3 million mentions of NP week in the media to 3.5 million mentions! We learned that the single most influential factor in a legislator's decision making was visits from constituents, followed closely by personalized letters and email from constituents. They made several key points about how we can make a difference: (1) like/tweet your legislators, (2) call the legislator (or staff) at their state offices and make an appointment to see them, (3) make yourself a resource on health care issues, (4) print our pertinent articles, attach a note and mail them, (5) attend town hall meetings, and (6) write letters to the editor. As we make ourselves more visible to our legislators we will begin to have more of an impact and help take control of the dialogue.

Frank Sesno, former CNN Washington bureau chief and the director of the School of Media and Public Affairs at The George Washington University, spoke on HealthCare in the Media. Mr. Sesno reminded us that one of the most important things we do in medicine and nursing is tell stories. He urged us to tell "data-driven" stories and to use every opportunity to tell them, especially by embracing and engaging the social media. His key points were (1) be proactive, start your own story, (2) don't spin, (3) think nationally, act locally, and (4) remember that stories involve compelling characters trying to overcome obstacles to achieve an outcome. Finally he taught us that as we think about our stories, we should think in bullet points and then rotate them, highlighting different elements of our story as we work to counter the prevailing narrative in traditional and social media. As we make ourselves more visible, we will become known as a resource in our areas of expertise.

We also got to hear from Tara Isa Koslov, Deputy Director of the FTC Office of Policy Planning, who explained how the exciting new Policy Perspectives paper released this March entitled Competition and the Regulation of Advanced Practice Nurses came to be. This policy paper will be a valuable tool in our advocacy efforts at state and national levels. If you haven't read it, go to the FTC website and do so.

Finally, the Honorable Alan Wheat, former Congressman and now Chairman of Polsinell's Public Policy practice, spoke to us about Political Pressure on Congress: What You Don't See in the News. Mr. Wheat gave an inspiring talk about what it takes to make a difference. He told us to "be passionate, be powerful and be memorable" as we advocate for our patients and ourselves. He instructed us to use the credibility of our profession in approaching our congressional leaders and transfer that credibility to them as we "close the sale." And finally, he admonished us to be persistent – don't give up!

There were many more valuable and informative presentations. We were well prepared to spend our last day meeting with our legislators to educate them and promote NPs with particular emphasis on the Home Health bill (S1322/HR2504), the DME bill (HR3833), and on the VA full scope policy issue. I hope that these key messages will inspire each of us to continue this work in this climate of rapidly changing health care reform so that we as NPs are very much a part of the process and leading the change.

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