



Nurses Leading the Way

A Holistic View of Excellence

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Healthcare professionals and patients realize that healthcare is forever changing. Yet 1 thing remains constant: Nursing leaders are driven to perform effectively, economically, and efficiently while being highly invested in human caring. Doing the right intervention at the right time for the patient, their families, and communities continues to inspire us. No wonder the annual Gallup survey on Honesty and Ethics in Professions shows that Americans rank nursing as the most trusted profession, year after year.¹

Nursing is a holistic profession aligned with treating the patient as a whole person with a steadfast commitment. Nursing takes the duty of advocacy for our patients as sacred work, and the profession has been

grounded in this understanding for more than 100 years. Over the decades, we became nurse scientists, scholars, administrators, and entrepreneurs, all leading the way for healthcare evolution.

Goals for the future among nursing leaders in the United States and beyond focus on retention and development of workforce, continuous quality improvement, financial stewardship, positioning organizations to achieve and sustain high levels of quality and satisfaction outcomes, and being recognized as leaders in healthcare services.

The 34th annual meeting of the American Holistic Nursing Association (AHNA) occurred in June 2014 and promoted the theme “Through the Looking Glass: A Vision of Holistic Leadership.” A plenary session was held by American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) leadership and colleagues from the BirchTree Center for Healthcare Transformation, the world’s oldest and largest holistic nursing education center. Speakers were asked to address the alignment of Magnet® Model² components and the AHNA holistic nursing principles.³

A brief review of holistic nursing and the inception of AHNA may assist readers in understanding the longstanding relationship with the American Nurses Association (ANA). Since December 2006, holistic nursing has been recognized by ANA as a nursing specialty. The 2nd edition of *Holistic Nursing: Scope and Standards of Practice*,³ published in 2013 by the AHNA, includes 5 core values (see below) and 16 standards of professional performance for holistic nursing.

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Holistic nursing is defined as “all nursing practice that has healing the whole person as its goal.”^{3(p8)} Holistic nursing is universal and inclusive of all specialties and settings because of its focus on the quality of relationships, healing, and compassionate care. Nurse leaders can embrace a holistic philosophy by incorporating the core values (Table 1) to support a progressive leadership approach in all healthcare settings.

Holistic nursing is often associated with integrative-complementary modalities. Although these modalities, such as aromatherapy or music therapy, are associated with improved patient outcomes and enhanced healing connections, they do not define the essence of holistic practice. Holistic leaders intuitively know it is the nurse’s therapeutic presence, intention, and influence—their *way of being*—that denote the core of holistic nursing practice.

Holistic leadership is closely related to the Magnet Model² component of transformational leadership, with a focus on the leader’s personal capacity to inspire others with a compelling vision. As nurse leaders guide the profession through healthcare reform and person-centered care, exemplary interprofessional collaboration is required. A holistic worldview that recognizes the interconnectedness of all humans and our planet is essential. More organizations are choosing holistic or caring frameworks as a guiding philosophy or to shape their professional practice models. These frameworks are well aligned with the Magnet principles of nursing excellence, innovation, and leadership.² Holistic nursing anchors the principles in practice with compassion and competence.

Holistic nursing practice core values³ include the following:

1. Holistic Philosophy, Theories, and Ethics
2. Holistic Caring Process
3. Holistic Communication, Therapeutic Healing Environment, and Cultural Diversity
4. Holistic Education and Research
5. Holistic Nurse Self-Reflection and Self-Care

Crosswalks to Fusion: Core Values of Holistic Nursing and Magnet Model Components

For the plenary session, we built crosswalks between the 5 core values of holistic nursing³ and the 5 components of the Magnet Model² to demonstrate how they guide, support, and strengthen one another to advance nursing practice. Next, we identified examples within nursing that display the fusion between the 2 principles. For the purpose of this column, we include only samples of these crosswalks (Table 1).

Table 1. Crosswalks: Core Values of Holistic Nursing³—Magnet Model Components² (Examples Only, Not Inclusive)

AHNA Core Values	Holistic Philosophy, Theories, and Ethics	Holistic Caring Process	Holistic Communication, Therapeutic Healing Environment, Cultural Diversity	Holistic Education and Research	Holistic Nurse Self-reflection and Self-care
Magnet model components					
Transformational leadership	Holistic leadership principles				
Structural empowerment	Shared governance		Holistic Practice Council; therapeutic healing environment		Self-care as a leadership competency
Exemplary professional practice		Therapeutic presence; nurse-patient engagement			
New knowledge, innovations, and improvements				Research and evidence-based practice	Renewal Rooms™
Empirical outcomes		Clinical indicators; satisfaction indicators		IOM report ACA	

Abbreviations: IOM, The Future of Nursing Report, Institute of Medicine; ACA, Affordable Care Act.

Crosswalk Exemplars

The final step of the plenary presentation incorporated clinical application exemplars of the crosswalks. Two exemplars that demonstrate the fusion between the core values of holistic nursing³ and Magnet principles² follow.

Transformational Leadership—Holistic Nurse Self-reflection and Self-care: Self-care as a Leadership Competency

Keeping the qualities of therapeutic presence, intentionality, and compassionate care alive in oneself and cultivating them in others requires a commitment to self-care, self-reflection, and personal renewal. Seen as a skill set, the practice of reflection and renewal permits the leader to remain focused, reduce distractions, and be productive amid the “outside noise.”⁴ When holistic nurse leaders model self-care and endorse it as a leadership competency, they build greater capacity for creativity, engagement, and resilience in their teams.

Exemplary Professional Practice—Holistic Caring Process: Therapeutic Presence and Nurse-Patient Engagement

Holistic nurse leaders understand the relationship between nurse-patient engagement, nurse-sensitive clinical indicators, and quality outcomes as key in today’s healthcare climate. When the clinical nurse is an authentic therapeutic caring presence, the outcomes dem-

onstrated will include both enhanced patient and nurse satisfaction.

The holistic nurse leader creates a therapeutic healing environment and a culture conducive to caring for the whole person by making an active daily choice to identify ways to illuminate and articulate nursing excellence in patient, provider, and organizational outcomes.

Transformational leadership and exemplary professional practice remain critical success factors for organizations to meet and exceed the demands of a very complex healthcare environment. It is the engagement and motivation of the entire team that best position organizations to achieve, exceed, and advance healthcare initiatives. Alignment of the AHNA Holistic Nursing Principles³ and the ANCC Magnet Model² demonstrates that the profession of nursing is strong and focused on creating a therapeutic and healing work environment conducive to advancing nursing practice.

Nursing remains a critical partner in the success of national healthcare. Holistic nursing is aligned with nursing practice at the highest level of excellence. We embrace that nursing is a part of a larger, interprofessional team that, through mutual collaboration and support, creates the best possible environment for patients and the team. Nursing’s voice must remain courageous, bold, scholarly, strong, and unified to advance healthcare reformation now and in the future.

References

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