The power of human connection cannot be overstated. In a year of necessary change, some things have remained the same: our patients, students, colleagues, and communities still need us, and our most important tool remains ourselves.

As nurses we are practical. We find solutions to problems, and we find ways to effect change more broadly based on those solutions. What practical and necessary changes have you put into place over the past year? I invite you to take a breath and reflect on the remarkable ways that you have innovated. And then I invite you to share them.

This year’s APNA Annual Conference will be a first look at how we have adapted and changed our practice and how we have become better because of it. When you submit an abstract for presentation, you will add your voice to this first look at how, in spite of all we are going through, psychiatric-mental health nurses continue to triumph through innovation and the power of human connection. The deadline is March 1, so don’t delay!

Matthew Tierney, MS, CNS, ANP, PMHNP, CARN-AP, FAAN
APNA President

Q&A with APNA Scholarly Review Committee Chair Allyson Matney Neal, DNP, APRN, PMHNP-BC, CNS-BC, CPNP

The APNA Scholarly Review Committee is a group of members with expertise across administration, education, practice, and research, who peer review abstracts submitted for the APNA Annual Conference each year. As Chair of this committee, Dr. Matney Neal plays an integral role in selecting abstracts for presentation and placing those abstracts into the program.

What are a few examples of topics that you think would make great abstracts?

Topics related to mental health care during a pandemic and how practice has changed, as well as preliminary outcomes from those changes. Topics like telehealth and psychotherapy, cultivating a therapeutic milieu, family education, and the new vital sign – “wear a mask” – all would be relevant to this time and valuable to peers.

What are a few tips for submitting a successful abstract?

Read, read, and read. The best writers are also known to be avid readers. Know your subject and show why others should be interested in it as well.

Anything else you’d like to share?

We are all looking for better ways to provide care and education. Submitting an abstract is a great way to share your knowledge and experience!

Visit www.apna.org/conference-topics for a full list of abstract topic suggestions.
You have innovated... You have adapted...

You have continued to provide effective nursing care. That has been at the forefront of the APNA CPI Program Committee’s minds as they built the program for the APNA Clinical Psychopharmacology Institute this June 10-13. An exciting lineup of speakers will speak to the psychopharmacologic updates and downstream effects of the pandemic that you need to inform your nursing care at this moment. Notably, the Directors of National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) and the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse & Alcoholism (NIAAA) with both be sharing their considerable expertise!

As Director at NIMH, Joshua Gordon, MD, PhD oversees the lead federal agency for research on mental disorders’ extensive portfolio of research. This research is pursued with one underlying goal: “to transform the understanding and treatment of mental illnesses, paving the way for prevention, recovery, and cure.” His keynote will provide an overview of the state of the current research – what has been discovered and what is being learned – that impacts your practice. In his personal research, Dr. Gordon focuses on analyzing the neural activity in mice who are carrying mutations that are relevant to psychiatric disease. Using an integrative neuroscience perspective, his research seeks an understanding of how a disease mutation leads to a behavioral phenotype. This cutting-edge research is directly relevant to schizophrenia, anxiety disorders, and depression.

George Koob, PhD, Director at NIAAA, is an internationally renowned expert in the neurobiology of alcohol and drug addiction as well as alcohol and stress. With the increased stress and rising substance use rates we are seeing currently, his understanding of why some people transition from alcohol or other substance use to misuse while others do not, is incredibly relevant. NIAAA, the largest funder of alcohol research in the world, is currently funding research related to alcohol use and the COVID-19 pandemic. Dr. Koob’s own body of research has significantly advanced current understanding of the adaptations within reward and stress neurocircuits that lead to addiction.
To help expand substance use disorder (SUD) education for nursing students, APNA created a one-day workshop that equips undergraduate and graduate nursing students with practical tools and builds their confidence during patient interactions. The program, funded by a two-year grant provided by the Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration*, will help new nurses entering the workforce to meet rising substance use needs.

The education was designed by PMH nurse experts in education and SUD to complement curricula for programs ranging from BSN to post- licensure DNP. It was implemented throughout 2020 in partnership with nine universities from across the country. 41 faculty and 300+ students participated via Zoom, with faculty members receiving an advance tutorial to allow them to assume a facilitator role during the workshop.

The vast majority of the participants agree that health outcomes for patients will improve as a result of using the techniques in their practice. Said one student, “I feel better equipped to recognize signs of substance abuse and have a therapeutic conversation with my patients.” Among the group, 94% say they would recommend the education to colleagues. Another student envisions broader applications, stating, “I feel much more prepared to interact [with] and assess patients with psychiatric conditions. I think this can be carried over to all nursing practice as well.”

The education explores stigma around SUDs and the need for cultural humility to reduce barriers to treatment in both nurses and patients. Techniques such as Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment and Motivational Interviewing prepare learners to identify substance use and encourage behavior change through guided conversation. One participant explains the benefits: “I feel much better about approaching sensitive topics and how to talk to patients in a productive way.” Because the education complements existing curricula, university faculty can easily incorporate these concepts into their ongoing instruction. The program will continue to be provided to more universities through 2021, with an update on opioid use disorder.

*SAMHSA/APNA Prac-Ed: Integrating Substance Use Disorder, Screening and Assessment into Treatment (FOA No. FG-19-001)

**APNA SAMHSA Grant Curriculum Advisory Panel**

Kris McLoughlin, DNP, APRN, PMHCNS-BC, FAAN – Lead Faculty Advisor
Carol Essenmacher, DNP, NCTTP
Diane Esposito, PhD, ARNP, PMHCNS-BC
Laura Leahy, DrNP, APRN, PMH-CNS/FNP, CARN-AP, FAANP
Matthew Tierney, MSN, PMHNP-BC, ANP-BC, CARN-AP, FAAN
WINTER 2021

APNA Elections: Call for Nominations Now Open!

PMH nurses provide vital services to our patient population and their families, especially during the past year, and APNA provides critical resources to help us. To serve on the APNA Board of Directors is to be on the cutting edge of current trends and needs for our profession. It is important that we have representation from all levels of PMH nursing and model diversity and inclusiveness on the board. What a great privilege it has been to serve as president of this important group of nurses. Please consider volunteering your voice and expertise to help lead all PMH nurses on the board or Nominating Committee. I promise it will be an enriching experience.

— Immediate Past President Tari (Sattaria) Dilks, RN, DNP, APRN, PMHNP-BC, FAANP

Deadline: April 7, 2021 | www.apna.org/CallforNominations