We recently hit the one-year mark of this global pandemic. I wish to remind you that you have been under a heightened level of stress for a significant period of time. Remember to treat yourself with the same care and grace you use with others. And remember that there are resources available to help on the APNA website.

When it comes to the impacts of the pandemic on those with mental health and substance use disorders, this year’s virtual APNA Clinical Psychopharmacology Institute will offer updates and cutting-edge clinical pearls that will help you meet patients’ needs where they are now.

Nothing can quite replace the fellowship of connecting with psychiatric-mental health nurses who understand what you are experiencing. Even though it is virtual, CPI will provide ample opportunities to chat and discuss issues with your colleagues from around the country. If last year’s virtual CPI is any indication, it will be just the energizing and rejuvenating experience we need right now.

As we forge ahead, I encourage you to continue finding things to be hopeful about. Whether they be the certainty of collegial connection, the hope for the end of the pandemic, or even just the first days of spring, these bright spots will help us even if we face difficulty.

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

ADHD is one of the most treatable psychiatric disorders. However, there is a lot of room for improvement when supporting persons with ADHD who are prescribed medication:

Studies show that only 13% of patients consistently take their medication one year out.

This is despite the fact that stimulant medications are known to be safe and effective, says Joseph Biederman, MD. (FDA approved non-stimulants are safe as well, but generally less effective than stimulants.) Engagement strategies, such as text message reminders, can be cost effective and help adults with ADHD regularly take their medication over the long term. Dr. Biederman will present Current Concepts in the Neurobiology of ADHD Across the Life Cycle this June 13th at the virtual APNA Clinical Psychopharmacology Institute.

Disparities in Chronic Stress

African Americans experience 60% more stressful events than Non-Hispanic Whites, a higher prevalence of hypertension than any other ethnic group, and are twice as likely to get Alzheimer’s disease or other dementias than White Americans. “Both chronic stress and uncontrolled hypertension are risk factors for cognitive decline and Alzheimer’s disease and related Dementias”, says Kathy Wright PhD, RN, APRN-CNS, PMHCNS-BC. To help you recognize chronic stress in the clinical setting, Dr. Wright suggests several survey measures of stress, including the Perceived Stress Scale and the Everyday Discrimination Scale. Learn more about recognizing, assessing, and treating discrimination stress, COVID-19 stress, and chronic stress in her CPI presentation, Integrated Care of Elders to Manage Psychological Stress in the Midst of a Crisis, this June 11th.

Register for the virtual APNA Clinical Psychopharmacology Institute this June 10-13 at www.apna.org/CPI.
Bridging the Gap

Care of an individual with a psychotic disorder is complex and requires great compassion, courage, and concern on the part of both the nurse and the patient. The process of engagement, therapeutic relationship, and therapeutic alliance involves making a human-to-human connection and conveying:

- acceptance and empathy
- sincerity and respect
- validation of distress
- engagement and interest

Bridging the gap between provider and patient through therapeutic engagement fosters safe clinical environments, a sense of empowerment and joy in the work, and a sense of validation in the patient. For more evidence-based information on the foundational aspects of psychiatric-mental health nursing practice, visit the newly updated APNA Transitions in Practice Certificate Program.

Addressing Cultural Stressors

Latino/a adolescents experience higher levels of depressive symptoms than Caucasian and African American adolescents. An integrative review shows that there is a significant relationship between a cultural stressor and depressive symptoms in this population, particularly the stressor of discrimination. Nurses who work with this population should address this issue in their therapeutic work. For example, the nurse can provide the opportunity to discuss ethnically based microaggressions experienced or facilitate ethnic identity exploration to challenge negative internalized beliefs. This research by Allison McCord started with funding from an APNA Research Grant in 2017. Her work was then funded by the National Institutes of Nursing Research and the results published in the Journal of the American Psychiatric Nurses Association.

Language Matters

Language reflects one’s attitude, and when it comes to addressing the topic of suicide, the goal is always to use language that conveys a respectful and considerate attitude. When assessing suicide risk, don’t miss the opportunity to choose language that describes the patient’s experience. For example, using terms like successful, completed, and failed in this context can send a hurtful message. And words like parasuicide, suicidality, and suicide gesture run the risk of becoming a label, rather than a description of what the person before you is experiencing. For more tips and to increase your confidence in the nursing skills of suicide assessment, management, and prevention, explore the APNA Competency Based Training for Suicide Prevention, which will be available virtually soon!

The Sleepy Brain

When a person experiences issues with sleep, the part of the brain that is likely involved is the thalamus. The thalamus strongly influences sleep not related to light, as well as affecting circadian rhythmicity and the pineal functions that signal the production and secretion of melatonin. Lack of sleep greatly impacts the functions of other areas of the brain, such as the hypothalamus. Without at least six hours of uninterrupted sleep each night, brain homeostasis is disrupted, preventing the processing of stresses that occurred during the day. For more on key brain structures and nursing interventions that target symptoms based on principles of neurobiology, check out the APNA Certificate Program: Understanding the Brain-Behavior Connection.
Nursing educators have discovered a reliable tool in the APNA Transitions in Practice Certificate Program: comprehensive education for PMH-RNs just starting out, or seasoned nurses who may be new to psychiatric-mental health nursing. Content is presented by recognized experts in the field and focuses on core topics like therapeutic engagement, patient-centered communication, safety and risk assessments, recovery-oriented care, and more. Participants earn 16 contact hours (more than half of the hours required for certification).

Information from experts helps me better assess where I’m at in my practice, how I can make changes, and what I still need to learn to improve my practice.

99% agree that ATP increased their knowledge and/or skills related to their practice.

100% agree that the content was appropriate to their level of practice.

This course was a great review of what I learned in my undergraduate psychiatric-mental health nursing course, but it went into depth on evidence-based practice topics that were very applicable to real world practice. It was a good ‘bridge’ between a lecture and actual life as a nurse.

With a newly updated version, learners can be confident that they are getting the latest in evidence-based information. The update for 2021 also focused on the learner experience. Videos and case studies promote critical thinking and offer opportunities to apply concepts to practice settings, while more self-assessments ensure proficiency as the learner progresses through the modules.

For more information, including discounts for groups of 10 or more, visit www.apna.org/atp

Many nurses come with medical expertise yet lack skills necessary to care for those diagnosed with mental illness... The APNA Transitions in Practice (ATP) online training has been the solution.

6,000 nurses have completed the program.

The American Psychiatric Nurses Association is accredited with distinction as a provider of nursing continuing professional development by the American Nurses Credentialing Center’s Commission on Accreditation.
More than a year into the pandemic, you might be experiencing a range of emotions. Research from previous major disasters provides a guide for how many of us will continue to process through this time:

REMEMBER:
- Listen to your body
- Exercise self-compassion
- Seek social support
- Use your coping mechanisms
- Give yourself permission to make time for self-care
- Get help if you need it

Whole health begins with mental health - for those you serve AND for you, too.