

Tri-Council for Nursing

Engaging the Nursing Education Community in the Local Response to the Ebola Virus

A joint statement from the Tri-Council for Nursing:
American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN)
American Nurses Association (ANA)
American Organization of Nurse Executives (AONE)
National League for Nursing (NLN)

The global nursing workforce plays a critical role in ensuring patient safety and promoting optimal health. As first responders when health-threatening emergencies arise, nurses are always there to provide lifesaving care as the patient's strongest advocate and protector.

The devastating impact the Ebola virus is having on communities and healthcare professionals in West Africa demands an international response and underscores the need to expedite efforts to contain this communicable disease. The emergence of Ebola infections in the United States has heightened local concerns about our healthcare system's ability to respond effectively to prevent the spread of the virus while maintaining the safety of the public and caregivers.

The Tri-Council for Nursing, which includes representatives from nursing education, research, and practice, supports efforts that engage all segments of the nursing workforce in eradicating the Ebola virus. Nurses are deployed in all places where healthcare is delivered, including community health settings that are critical to serving vulnerable and underserved populations. With formal training and advanced preparation on how to protect patients as well as their own health, nurses working in communities and acute care environments should be called to lead efforts that educate the public about Ebola and personal safety measures. As the most trusted healthcare providers, nurses can and should play a greater role in reducing fears that may persist in the face of conflicting information.

Academic nursing leaders are understandably concerned about maintaining the safety of students and faculty engaged in clinical training activities both in the U.S. and abroad. These concerns could be minimized through a more aggressive approach to educating nurses about Ebola treatment and response. Further, our nursing education infrastructure can be leveraged to serve as an important asset in our nation's approach to emergency preparedness. With nursing schools operating in every state, more than a half million nursing students have the potential to serve as important resources to patients and communities when it comes to answering questions and allaying fears about Ebola.

To prepare the nursing education community to assume a larger role in caring for and communicating with the public about Ebola, faculty, students, and clinical educators must be well-versed in the latest recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention related to the safety of healthcare personnel, including the use of Personal Protective Equipment. The Tri-Council for Nursing urges schools of nursing to partner with local, state, and federal authorities to increase their efforts to expand public awareness about appropriate measures to take related to Ebola prevention and response.

Together, we stand with our global colleagues as they heroically face this serious healthcare challenge. Together, we can stop this communicable disease, reduce fear, and make significant strides to improve global health.