**The American Travel Health Nurses Association**

**140 Todd Lane**

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September 17, 1917

American Nurses Association

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To the American Nurses Association-

 We write to you today to request official recognition of the specialty of Travel Health Nursing by the American Nurses Association (ANA). Travel health nurses are professional nurses who care for travelers in a wide variety of clinical settings-including private clinics, universities, public health departments, the military and occupational health units. We provide pre-travel services to individuals and families who travel nationally or internationally to disease-risk areas; our services include assessment, immunizations, prevention counseling and medications by prescriptive authority. Many of us also participate in the care of returning travelers who present post-travel with such conditions such as malaria, dengue fever, TB, and other trip related maladies. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and others in this field estimate that more than 25,000 U.S. nurses currently provide travel health clinical services. To date, however, our specialized knowledge and skill set has not been formally recognized by the ANA, the well-known leader and established voice for professional nursing in this country.

 Travel medicine is growing as an acknowledged medical specialty. CDC has had a branch dedicated to this field for more than 20 years. Since the 1990’s there have been textbooks, journals, and conferences focused solely on the knowledge and skills of travel medicine that is an entity distinct from tropical medicine and infectious disease. The CDC *Health Information for International Travel* (commonly called the Yellow Book) was first published in 1967. U.S. nurses contribute to all these publications and professional meetings. The international nursing role in this field has been well established for many years by nursing authorities in such countries as the United Kingdom, Scotland, and the Netherlands.

 Since its inception in 1998, The International Society of Travel Medicine (ISTM) has recognized the integral and important role of nursing professionals. Today, nurses represent nearly a quarter of that society whose 3,500 members (physicians, pharmacists, nurses, and others) come from more than 90 countries. ISTM has had a Nurses Professional Group from the early years of its founding and nurses serve on the faculty of all of its meetings. In addition, nurses contribute to its peer reviewed journal, gain recognition as fellows of the society, and receive annual awards for their achievements in the field. Nurses are one of several health professional groups eligible to sit for the ISTM “Certificate in Travel Health” exam to obtain the CTH™ credential. However, ISTM is an interdisciplinary and international organization and it became clear early on that there was a need for a professional group that focused on developing standards specifically for U.S. nurses.

 To address the need for a U.S. professional travel health nursing group, the American Travel Health Nurses Association (ATHNA) [www.athna.org](http://www.athna.org) was organized to promote the professional development and quality standards of travel health nurses in this country. Since its incorporation as a membership organization in 2004, ATHNA' s mission has been to advance nurses engaged in the care of international travelers through professional development, evidence- based practice, and advocacy. Toward that goal, ATHNA provides:

* Nursing leaders who speak to professional and lay audiences at international, national, state, and local events to ultimately improve the quality of patient care
* Representatives that collaborate with other professionals such as physicians, veterinarians, researchers, public health officials, and pharmacists across a multitude of organizations including the American College Health Association (ACHA), ISTM, CDC, and the American Association of Occupational Health Nurses (AAOHN)
* A website to facilitate the sharing of relevant and reliable professional resources [www.athna.org](http://www.athna.org)
* Substantive blog posts from experts in the field to address timely topics of importance to travel health nurses
* An annual, and unique, Networking, Education, and Development (NED) event that provides a free day of CE for our members at simultaneous locations across the country
* Networking support through info@athna.org for nurses starting travel health clinics, seeking guidance with clinical challenges, pursuing advanced degrees, engaging in research, etc.
* Awards for travel health nursing research

In 2014, ATHNA developed the *Scope and Standards for Travel Health Nursing* that is accepted internationally as a model for comprehensive and quality nursing care for travelers. Currently ATHNA is also working with CDC, ISTM, and ACHA to initiate national research studies on issues of student travel health.

 ATHNA will continue to provide support to travel health nursing, but only the ANA can designate our practice as a U.S. nursing specialty. We believe the time is right. In the past few years all stakeholders in global health, as well as the general public, have gained a greater understanding and appreciation for the impact of illness connected with international travel. The ongoing threat of Zika is just one example. Travel health nurses work at the forefront of efforts to protect the health and safety of travelers and the communities to which they return.

 We know that ANA recognition can have a significant impact on our practice and our patients. Not only will individual nurses be recognized for the specialized care they provide, but this recognition will also encourage academic nursing to include travel health content in their curriculum. Recognition will help us promote our *Scope and Standards* to insure that nurses and their employers provide *every* traveler, in *every* clinical setting, with the highest standards of travel –related nursing care. The public will come to value our expertise in this nursing specialty which is so much more than immunizations. Finally, nurses will have enhanced credibility as researchers and policy makers and will have broader influence in decision -making to positively impact patient care and public health policy.

 We sincerely hope that the ANA will proceed to recognize travel health nursing in this country as a distinct professional nursing specialty. We look forward to working with you to achieve this goal in 2017. We ask that you direct all correspondence to Gail Rosselot, ATHNA President garosselot@aol.com. Thank you.

Sincerely,

The ATHNA Board of Directors

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