American Travel Health Nurses Association: A Journey to ANA Specialty Status for Travel Health Nursing


Introduction

According to CDC and others, an estimated 25,000 nurses provide pre-and-post travel clinical care to U.S. travelers. In 2012, the American Travel Health Nurses Association (ATHNA) began a seven year journey to achieve American Nurses Association (ANA) recognition of travel health nurses (THNs) as a specialty group of professional nurses.

Why ANA Specialty Recognition Matters

Provide standards for THNs, other health professionals and the public about what constitutes travel health nursing practice
Promote and guide the delivery of pre and post-travel quality nursing care
Facilitate the development and dissemination of professional nursing knowledge in travel health in education environments
Serve as a resource to THNs and their employers for job descriptions, orientation manuals, ongoing training, and professional promotion
Serve as a reference for the scope and performance standards of travel health nursing for use by governments and the legal system
Promote participation in travel health nursing research and evidence-based practice
Guide performance improvement initiatives in clinical and organizational environments and promote ethical practice
Serve as a vehicle to advance the specialty of travel health nursing and improve health outcomes for travelers and the communities to which they travel and return.

Methods

Between 2012 and 2019, ATHNA’s Board of Directors convened a series of working groups to document the role of the US THN and to meet the 14 ANA criteria required for specialty recognition. 81% of 200 nurses of working groups to document the role of the US THN and to meet the 14 ANA criteria required for specialty recognition. 81% of 200 nurses identified this as the highest professional priority. A two year role delineation initiative was undertaken, involving experienced nurses from multiple practice settings who reviewed the professional literature and job descriptions. A major membership campaign was launched and per ANA requirements, a series of 5 documents were then developed.

Documents Developed:
- A History of THNs in the US
- THN Code of Ethics
- THN Conceptual Framework
- Forecasting THN Trends
- Scope and Standards of Travel Health Nursing, 3rd Edition

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500% Increase in ATHNA Membership with over 1500 members from all 50 states and 14 practice settings

Conceptual Framework

Conclusions

Through a seven year effort that involved 1) engaging a working group of expert U.S. travel health nurses from a multitude of practice settings, 2) completing a role delineation study, 3) researching national and international guidelines and competencies, and 4) utilizing multiple methods to enlarge its membership, ATHNA has:


Substantiated the Expert Knowledge and Skills required to effectively work in the role of a competent U.S. THN

Professional Competencies for six Standards of Practice and Ten Standards of Professional Performance
Issued a Model Core Curriculum and travel health nursing Glossary on its website

Written the first Code of Ethics for Travel Health Nurses

Increased its membership 500% to over 1400 members from all 50 U.S. states and 14 practice settings

Achived its goal to complete the application process for official recognition by the American Nurses Association of travel health nursing as a nursing specialty, Application currently pending with ANA

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References