

It Is Time

Vallire D. Hooper, PhD, RN, CPAN, FAAN

IT IS TIME. As I write this, it is Sunday, August 4th. It is the day after 2 mass shootings have taken 29 innocent lives. Two white males have gone on two separate shooting rampages, killing 29 innocent people and injuring countless others, one fueled by pure hate, the other with behavioral health issues. The outcomes, regardless of motive, were equally tragic. Yesterday, I had a completely different editorial planned. But it is time. The hard truth must be addressed.

It is Time for Gun Control

It is time for common-sense gun control. No one wants to “take your guns,” unless your guns are automatic, high-capacity assault weapons. These weapons are not “guns”; they are instruments of mass destruction, intended to maim and kill in mass. Although appropriate on the battlefield, and perhaps for certain components of law enforcement, automatic assault weapons are not needed to defend one’s home, and they certainly are not needed to hunt ...unless as is the case in mass shootings, your prey is innocent human beings.

Common-sense gun control must also include background checks and required waiting periods after weapon purchase. The capacity to immediately buy and walk away with a gun, either from a store or gun fair, must end. Background checks must include both criminal and behavioral health reviews. Waiting periods should be a minimum of 24 to 48 hours, for both the safety of the public

and the safety of the individual buying the gun. Self-inflicted gunshot is the most deadly method of attempted suicide. Evidence also shows, however, that most people contemplating suicide will abandon the idea if not carried through within 24 hours.¹ Think of the lives that could be saved with a simple required waiting period before a gun purchase.

It is Time for Behavioral Health Care

It is also time for comprehensive behavioral health screening and care. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)² estimates that at least 50% of Americans will suffer from mental illness at some point in their lives, with mental illness being the third highest cause for hospitalization for adults aged 18 to 44 years. Given these numbers, it is logical to assume that a large percentage of your patients and/or their support system may be suffering from mental illness at the time of a surgical encounter. It is critical that nurses are educated in the assessment and management of such issues and that a facility plan is in place for the escalation of such issues. It is time to be proactive and prepared.

It is Time for Kindness

It is time for kindness ...to our neighbors, families, and friends; to those who look like us ...and those who do not; to those who worship as we do ...and those who do not; to all genders, ethnicities, and political affiliations. Hate, racism, white supremacy, and neo-Nazism must not be tolerated, at any level, from anyone, and certainly not from the highest office in the land. It is not acceptable to encourage violence against those who are different from you or who you do not agree with, tell people who do not look like or support you to go home ...to be sent back, call immigrants and people of color “infestations,” or celebrate personal crimes against one’s detractors. Such actions fan the flames of hate, empowering those who are particularly unstable to act irrationally and violently, as we have seen with the mass shootings in El Paso. We are all inhabitants of the same Earth;

The ideas or opinions expressed in this editorial are those solely of the author and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of ASPAN, the Journal, or the Publisher.

Vallire D. Hooper, PhD, RN, CPAN, FAAN, Research Institute, Mission Health, Asheville, NC.

Conflict of Interest: None to report.

Address correspondence to Vallire D. Hooper, Mission Health, Suite 2600, 1 Hospital Drive, Asheville, NC 28801; e-mail address: Vallire.Hooper@bcabhealthcare.com.

© 2019 Published by Elsevier, Inc. on behalf of American Society of PeriAnesthesia Nurses

1089-9472/\$36.00

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jopan.2019.08.003>

we all breathe the same air. Surely we can all agree that such acts should not be tolerated, regardless of political affiliation.

It Is Time for Nurses to Act

It is time for nurses to act, as individuals and in mass. As individuals, it is our responsibility to first and foremost treat all patients and colleagues equally, with kindness and understanding. It is also time to call out unacceptable behaviors when we witness them, both in the workplace and in the public sector at large. The nurse's role, above all else, is to advocate for the patient. Care must not be compromised by personal bias or political or religious beliefs. It is also our respon-

sibility to be informed. The American Nurses Association (ANA)³ and the American Academy of Nursing (AAN)⁴ have issued numerous position statements regarding gun violence, humanitarian treatment of immigrant families at the southern border, and many others. It is time to familiarize yourself with these statements and work to see that they are recognized and enforced.

It is time to be aware. It is time to take a stand. It is time to engage on both a personal and political basis. Nursing remains the most respected profession in the country.⁵ It is time to harness that respect to move the country forward in a positive direction. It starts with each of you. It is time.

References

1. Levy MS. Advocacy/Firearm Fatality Insight. Paper presented at: NCONL Annual Conference. 2019. Greensboro, NC.
2. CDC. Mental Health. https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/data_publications/index.htm. Accessed August 11, 2019.
3. ANA. ANA Official Position Statements. <https://www.nursingworld.org/practice-policy/nursing-excellence/official-position-statements/>. Accessed August 11, 2019.
4. AAN. Policy & Advocacy News. <https://www.aannet.org/news/policy-news>. Accessed August 11, 2019.
5. Brenan M. Nurses Again Outpace Other Professions for Honesty, Ethics. https://news.gallup.com/poll/245597/nurses-again-outpace-professions-honesty-ethics.aspx?g_source=link_NEWSV9&g_medium=NEWSFEED&g_campaign=item_&g_content=Nurses%2520Again%2520Outpace%2520Other%2520Professions%2520for%2520Honesty,%2520Ethics. Accessed August 11, 2019.