Letter to the Editor

Activating Nurses’ Collective Energy

In the May/June 2019 issue of Nursing Economic$, Robin Cogan, Med, RN, NCSN, provided a unique view from her own perspective and journey on the topic of activism on gun violence by connecting with a physician group and researcher, Dr. Megan Ranney (Cogan, 2019). Prior to this publication, I was not aware of the work the American Foundation for Firearm Injury Reduction in Medicine (AFFIRM) was doing. I was even more shocked to read that Ms. Cogan was the only nurse attending the 2019 meeting with AFFIRM to support the “urgency of funding firearm violence prevention” (p. 140). I agree whole-heartedly with her statement that “this must change” (p. 140) and lament the lack of activism on this topic from national nursing organizations.

Many groups and activists have emerged since the Parkland, FL, shooting at Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School. Young people are finding new ways to activate their networks and reach out to achieve results on this public health crisis, including the Orange Generation, and add to the growing voices from groups shaped after other horrific events including Everytown for Gun Safety and Moms Demand Action. Nurses’ voices should be among these. Ranked consistently as the most honest and ethical profession (Brenan, 2018), nursing lends credibility and strength when activating on issues of health.

Nurses in every setting, from the emergency department to the intensive-care unit, from school nursing to primary care settings, can make an impact with their knowledge and caring influence on this issue. Now is the time to speak on the impact of gun violence injuries and the need for mental health care. Past influence by the National Rifle Association has placed a stranglehold on gun violence research. The current administration and

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appropriations committee led by Republicans blocked funding in 2018 put forth for the Center for Disease Control and Prevention for gun violence (Cancryn, 2018). Now is the time to change this and more people speaking out in support can truly make a difference. Opportunities through AFFIRM’s (2019) website allow easy access to sign the petition supporting the appropriation bill passed by the House of Representatives for firearm injury prevention research, as well as access to local state representatives and senators to ensure they are aware of the support for this measure. In the words of Hillel the Elder, “If not now, when? If not you, who?”

Nurses have strength and power; this collective energy of caregivers can be utilized to improve the lives of communities, but we must activate. Let us answer yes to Cogan’s question, “Nurses, are we ready to join the call to action?” (p. 141).

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References

