



## *We are in this together*

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Nursing has seen a vast diversification of specialties from the traditional areas of general or medical, surgical and midwifery to what we know now as the dozens of specialties recognized through postgraduate education and specialization. In Australia and the United States, neuroscience nursing is represented by a number of key practice areas including stroke, neurocritical care, movement disorders, neurology and neurosurgical care. Despite differences in title, the sub-specialties share a common goal to enable optimal patient centered care through the advancement of neuroscience nursing. Working together as key peak bodies and organizations has been fundamental in maintaining access to resources, education and networking during the pandemic. It is not how we are different, but how we are alike, that held us together as a profession

during this pandemic.

Pandemics place healthcare systems under immense strain and limit the ability to deliver high quality patient-centered care. Over the past two years the nursing community has pulled together and demonstrated an ongoing commitment to patient-centered care under what can only be described as difficult circumstances.<sup>1</sup> The pandemic has given rise to the need for many adaptations.<sup>2</sup> Many of us have been anxious about the care we could - and have - provided as circumstances became ever more challenging and difficult. For the majority, it has been our peak bodies and organizations that have united us. They have supported professional judgement and risk assessment to undertake practices as safely as possible. They have been central in lobbying for safer staffing and advocating against the practice of long shifts, double shifts, and mandatory overtime. All nurses want safer practices, but we also want to do our part (even if it means driving four hours to deliver vaccinations). In nursing, there is a sense of wanting to belong to the workforce during the pandemic; wanting to contribute.

Neuroscience is a clinical specialty and thus personal interactions are an integral part of our identity. The once unthinkable notion that a neurological examination could be



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conducted virtually has been challenged by every aspect of the pandemic. The reality has been that the goal posts have moved and changed frequently. Even among those not directly exposed to COVID-19, many have experienced emotional distress and uncertainty. With visitor limitations and changing rules surrounding personal protective equipment (PPE) restrictions, it sometimes felt like we were nursing in isolation. Nurses had to contend with fear of becoming unwell, infecting others, redeployment, and balancing work with home/life factors such as home-schooling and isolation from family. Throughout the pandemic, nursing professional organizations have tried to provide access to a range of self-care and mental-health resources, education, and information.

The impact of COVID-19 continues to challenge our hospitals, the community, and our professional sense of identity. The pandemic initially sought to highlight our differences;

divide us into infected vs non-infected, essential vs non-essential personnel, and masked vs unmasked. But COVID-19 was a shared global experience that also taught us the value of working together. The world united to discover best-practices and develop a vaccine. We rediscovered that we are in this together and there is value in collaboration. This editorial is another step towards demonstrating that there is strength in working together, with the editorial from the Australasian Journal of Neuroscience (Australian Neuroscience Nursing Association) jointly published with the Journal of Neuroscience Nursing (American Association of Neuroscience Nurses). We invite you to help grow this collaboration by publishing in our journals.

1. Nichols L. 2020 to 2021 and Beyond.: The Strength, Vision and Resilience of Workforces. *Australasian Journal of Neuroscience*. 2021;31(1):3-4. doi:10.21307/ajon-2021-001a
2. Newby JC, Mabry MC, Carlisle BA, Olson DM, Lane BE. Reflections on Nursing Ingenuity During the COVID-19 Pandemic. *The Journal of neuroscience nursing : journal of the American Association of Neuroscience Nurses*. Oct 2020;52(5):E13-e16. doi:10.1097/jnn.0000000000000525

DOI: 10.21307/ajon-2022-001