



# VA APN NEWS

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS  
AFFAIRS  
ADVANCED PRACTICE  
NURSES

SPRING 2007

APRIL 2007

VA APN WEBSITE

[http://vaww.collage.research.med.va.gov/collage/N\\_APNAG/](http://vaww.collage.research.med.va.gov/collage/N_APNAG/)

## 1ST ANNUAL VA APN CONFERENCE HELD IN OCTOBER

### "A SUCCESS"

The first Annual VA APN Conference, "Bridging Clinical and Professional Dimensions of Practice" was held October 26, 2006 in San Antonio, Texas. The conference was well attended and the overall response was very positive. VA APNs were appreciative of the information gained and the opportunity for networking with APNs from all over the country.

The program was comprehensive and included topics such as:

Developing an Evidence Based Practice

Utilizing Advanced Technology to improve Communication, Care and Customer Service

Use of COLLAGE Web page

Cultural Health

Writing Proficiencies and Resumes

Review of Nursing Qualifications Standards

Peer Review

Results of APN Job Satisfaction Survey

Related story on pages 2 & 6

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## APN ADVISORY GROUP(APNAG) ANNUAL MEETING

October 2006, San Antonio , Texas

APN Advisory Group Members

Left to right

First row : Carol Einhorn, Deb Monicken, Joan Knox, April Gerlock, Anna Alt-White, Mary Falls

Second row: Rebecca Waldon, Julie Marcum, Carolyn Anich, Nancy Cook, Nora Krick, Brian Westwood

Mary Lovelady, Jan Elliott . New member , Mary Thomas, not pictured.



**VA APN News Editor:**  
**Rebecca Waldon, FNP**  
**APNAG**

**Editorial Board:**  
**Anna Alt-White, RN, PhD**  
**Office of Nursing Service**

**April Gerlock, ARNP**  
**Chair APNAG**

**Jan Elliott, AOCN**  
**Co Chair APNAG**

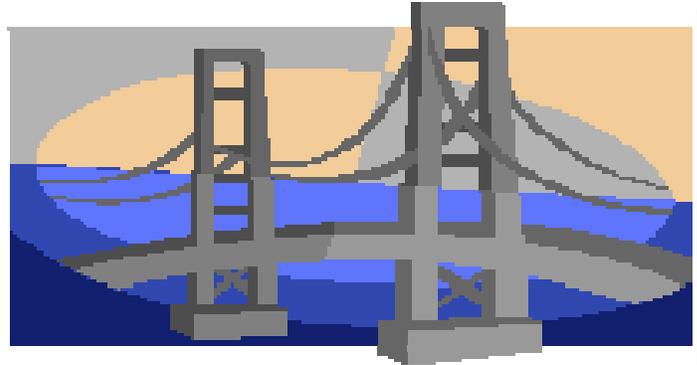
**1<sup>st</sup> VHA APN Conference, October 26, 2006**

**“Bridging Clinical and Professional Dimensions of Practice”**

By Carol Einhorn

In response to APN inquiries, the Advanced Practice Nursing Advisory Group (APNAG) had been planning and working on the concept of a national APN Conference. A proposal for an Advanced Practice Nurse Conference was developed. This proposal was submitted to Cathy Rick, Chief Nurse of the VHA and the National Nurse Executive Council for support and funding. The funding was approved in 2005 and the APNAG began finalizing the conference planning process. This whole process took about 3 years.

Carol Einhorn and Nancy Cook were the APNAG members very active in the planning.



The 1<sup>st</sup> VHA APN Conference, “Bridging Clinical and Professional Dimensions of Practice”, was held on October 26, 2006 in San Antonio, Texas. The one day conference was attached to the annual Texas Nurse Practitioner Conference held from October 26-30, 2006. Approximately 115 APNs attended the VHA meeting and of those, about half attended part or all of the Texas Nurse Practitioner meeting. There was a good response and quite a few poster submissions were received. There were 13 posters presented for participants to review and gain information. The participants received a CD Rom with the contents of presentations and posters and this decreased the need to take copious notes. The CD Rom will soon be available on our COLLAGE website for all APNs.

The morning sessions of the VHA conference focused on the development of an Evidence Based Practice Culture with additional presentations demonstrating use in daily practice. In addition, there was presentation on our new intranet site of COLLAGE and a presentation on discovering how advanced utilization of CPRS can assist in practice. The afternoon sessions provided insight into professional development addressing writing proficiencies, nursing qualification standards, resumes, and peer review. The day ended with a presentation with a synopsis of the data obtained from the APN Job Satisfaction Survey conducted by several APNs at the Palo Alto VA.

In addition to the knowledge and information gained through this monumental occasion there was excitement through the interchange of networking with other APNs in the VHA system. Also the participants came away feeling that they are not isolated; they found many new resources and experts in the field as contacts who are just an e-mail or phone call away. At the end of the conference, participants filled out questionnaires to give the Advanced Practice Advisory Group direction in certain areas. Evaluations are ongoing, here are the comments broken down in categories that were received:

**“ Responses to the question: What are some important issues that you want the APN Advisory Group to address?”**

**CATEGORY: SALARY, NATIONAL PROFESSIONAL SALARY BOARD**

Nurse IV questions	Separate pay ban for APNs in all facilities	Pay not at the director's discretion
APN vs. PA pay	Separate NPSB for APNs	MD Performance Pay

**CATEGORY: COLLEGIALLY/COLLABORATION**

Peer Review	Lead NP position	Competency
Credentialing and Privileging	Prescriptive Authority for controlled substances	Policy for use of location DEA number
Malpractice	Guidelines for transferring complex patients to MDs	APN Pamphlets for patients

**CATEGORY: COMMUNICATION /MISCELLANEOUS**

Communication from APN VISN representatives	Communication at all levels i.e. facility, VISN, National
National Communication Network	Network of Specialty Group to share areas of interest
Marketing and enhancing the CNS role	New evolving roles in Specialty Clinics
DNP role development and recognition	

More Conference Information on page 6

## **APN ADVISORY GROUP APNAG**

### **Letter from the Chair**

By April A. Gerlock

Hello VA Advanced Practice Nurses! This has been a busy and productive year for the Advanced Practice Nurses of the VA, and for the Advanced Practice Nursing Advisory Group (APNAG).

The very first national Advanced Practice Nursing conference was held in San Antonio, TX on October 26<sup>th</sup> of 2006. We were pleased with the wonderful turnout of over 100 Advanced Practice Nurses, from all across the nation and from all types of practice settings. The conference was packed with information pertinent to APNs of the VA, addressing everything from Evidence Based Practice (EBP) to APN satisfaction survey results. It was also wonderful to meet many of you in person for the first time. If you were unable to participate, you can access the power point presentations by going to the APNAG community of practice on COLLAGE. Participants of the conference indicated that they would like to have a national APN meeting yearly. While an annual meeting may not be possible, discussion has already begun about where and when our next meeting should take place. Thanks to all of you for attending!

Prior to our first national meeting, the APNAG met for a face-to-face meeting. Many of the critical issues that VA APNs have raised were discussed at that meeting, and strategies to address those concerns were identified. Some of you are involved in committee work to do just that. The APNAG revised their Mission Statement as well to better capture the strength, energy and teamwork that VA APNs represent. The APNAG mission is: To strengthen and enhance excellence in Advanced Practice Nursing through leadership, collaboration, and communication.

We would also like to introduce and welcome our newest member to the APNAG. Mary Thomas is a Clinical Nurse Specialist in Hematology, and represents VISNs 21-22. Learn more about Mary by reading the showcase in this newsletter. Mary represents the VISNs previously represented by Jan Elliott who has moved into the co-Chair position of the APNAG.

Many of you have visited the APNAG community of practice on COLLAGE. The site is still a work in progress, but is growing daily as we add more information and a forum for VA APNs to communicate nationally. If you have not done so already, please visit the site and register as a member.

The Veterans Health Administration (VHA), has a new APN Brochure coming out in 2007. The brochure will highlight the wide-range of activities in which VA APNs are involved, as well as the benefits of working for the VA. Again, thanks to many of you we were able to highlight the varied roles and settings as well as personal stories of APNs across the nation.

Improving communication at all levels of APN practice and work settings continues to be a priority for the APNAG. Most of the National Nurse Executive Council (NNEC) VISN representatives are meeting regularly with the APN VISN Liaison representative, APNs have regular meetings within their medical centers and VISNs with the APN Liaison representative, and our data base of the VA APNs nationally has continued to grow. We look forward to our APNAG COLLAGE site continuing to grow and improve and becoming a reliable source of information for you in the near future!

### **Spotlight on New APNAG MEMBER**

#### **VISNS 21,22**

#### **Mary L Thomas**

Mary L. Thomas RN, MS, AOCN is the Hematology Clinical Nurse Specialist at the VA Palo Health Care System, a position she's had for twenty-three years. She received her BS degree in Nursing from the University of Wisconsin in 1977 and her graduate degree in Oncology Nursing from UCSF in 1984, and remains on faculty at UCSF (non-salaried). Mary is a member of NOVA, Sigma Theta Tau, ANA, the Oncology Nursing Society, the Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group, and the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. She's had the opportunity to give presentations to patients, nurses, and physicians locally, nationally, and internationally. She recently was Co-PI on a grant funded by the VA Nurses Research Initiative exploring the efficacy of using a program of Coaching via telephone to improve pain management in persons with cancer. Mary has also been a PI on various small exploratory quality of life studies in the Multiple Myeloma and Myelodysplastic Syndromes patient populations. Mary has authored the chapter on Hematology Nursing for Brunner and Suddarth's Textbook of Medical-Surgical Nursing, and a chapter on quality of life in Greenberg's Myelodysplastic Syndromes (MDS): Clinical and Biological Advances, as well as papers in Oncology Nursing Forum, Medical Oncology, and Leukemia Research. Mary has also served as preceptor for graduate students, and lectured to RNP, psychology students, and house staff.

During her tenure at the VA, Mary has experienced multiple changes, including changes in nursing, patient care, and the VA system itself, on both a local and national level. She is acutely aware of the persistent problems in communication within such a vast network, and knows how easily APNs can become isolated within their own system. Mary is very excited to join APNAG and looks forward to working with a very talented and motivated group of APNs.

Mary is married and the mother of 17 year-old boy-girl twins. In her spare time, she enjoys cooking, gardening, hiking and staring out her window with incredible vistas of a natural open-space preserve

## **VISN 9 APN AWARDED PUBLIC HEALTH GRANT**

*Melverdine Young-Smith , MSN, FNP*

Melverdine Young-Smith is an Advanced Practice Nurse Practitioner at the Memphis VA Medical Center. She facilitates a weekly smoking cessation clinic, serves as a contact for veterans seeking assistance with smoking cessation and serves as the facilitator for the employees smoking cessation program at the medical center. She is also a member of the External Peer Review Program and is responsible for coordinating adherence to the tobacco performance measure for the Psychiatry Service. She was recently awarded a Public Health Grant to be used in 2006-2007. The award is sponsored by The Public Health Strategic Health Group (PHSHG) within the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). There were 42 grants in the amount of \$1,000.00 each available. The primary goal of this program is to encourage the development and implementation of education and prevention materials and programs related only to specific public health concerns. The specific public health concerns of HIV/AIDS, Smoking Cessation, Hepatitis C, Influenza, Hospital-acquired Infections, and Hand and Respiratory Hygiene were the focus. The target audience for these grants was clinicians from nursing service, prevention coordinators, smoking cessation clinicians, dentists, pharmacists, infection control clinicians, patient safety officers, HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C care clinicians.

The award granted to Mrs. Young-Smith, supports efforts to aid veterans with tobacco cessation and is co sponsored by the VHA/DOD ( Veterans Health Administration/Department of Defense). Her project is entitled The "5 A's Brief Tobacco Counseling". This counseling method is an evidenced based approach to screening and assisting the tobacco user to quit that can be done in 3-5 minutes. The VHA/DoD Clinical Practice Guidelines for the Management of Tobacco Use recommends any person eligible for care in the VHA/DoD health care delivery system should be screened for tobacco use. Every health care team member should urge tobacco users to quit. The use of strategies for counseling, cessation, and prevention of tobacco use is dependent on a systematic and consistent approach by the health care team as a whole. It is crucial that the health care provider ensures the tobacco abuser receives consistent counseling and medications to assist in quitting. Research has shown minimal counseling ( 3 minutes or less) to be more effective than no contact.

I.D. size laminated hang tags were developed that contain the "5 A's Brief Tobacco Counseling" method to Ask, Advise, Assess, Assist, and Arrange with examples of how to perform each. She has also had the "Tobacco Assessment" clinical reminder for providers template in CPRS updated to include this information as well. All disciplines will be issued a hang tag for future use and be inserviced on the use of the hang tag and documentation of its use in the patients medical record. Use of this template will allow the primary care provider of the encounter to automatically receive procedural credit for tobacco assessment counseling, 3-5 minute patient education and medication uses when that option is selected as well. Use of the reminder will allow facility tracking for services as well as providers that are counseling along the recommended guidelines of VHA/DoD.

## **APN COLLAGE WEBSITE , Present and Future Plans**

*By: Kathleen Burns RN, MS, CS, NP, VISN I; COLLAGE Liaison/Facilitator*

[http://vaww.collage.research.med.va.gov/collage/N\\_APNAG/](http://vaww.collage.research.med.va.gov/collage/N_APNAG/)

Above is the hyperlink to use for getting to the COLLAGE APN site. One should enter and make it a favorite for easy reference and retrieval.

The site is currently under development and new items are being considered and added daily. The intent of the COLLAGE website is to serve as a forum for communication, networking and collaboration among VA Advanced Practice Nurses to promote quality health care to Veterans.

There will be opportunities to post blogs, participate in discussion boards and chat room types of communication for APNs. The sites may also be restricted to certain group members, depending on the purpose and intended use .

There will be a FAQ (frequently asked questions) area with valuable information for VA APNS in the future.

APNAG and APN VISN Liaison charters will be posted. ONS (Office of Nursing Service), NNEC (National Nurse Executive Council) and Nurse Professional Standards Board (NPSB) will be some of the linked sites.

Archived minutes from APNAG and APN VISN Liaison Teleconferences will be available. APNAG 2006 minutes are available now under files on the blue tool bar.

The APN directory is a direct link from the first COLLAGE page. It is our goal to have every VA APN be able to access the site to add their names and change information as needed. Future plans include using the site for educational purposes in addition to posting information on Evidenced Based Practice, Credentialing and Privileging and updating the APN Tool Kit.

Contacts: Kathleen.Burns2@va.gov or Cara.Goff@va.gov

**APN ADVISORY GROUP (APNAG)**

The VA Advanced Practice Nurse Advisory Group was established to serve in an advisory capacity to the VA National Nursing Executive Council (NNEC) for the purpose of establishing, implementing and evaluating the strategic plan for Advanced Practice Nursing in the VA. The APNAG mission is to strengthen and enhance excellence in Advanced Practice Nursing through leadership, collaboration, and communication. The APN Advisory Group reports to the NNEC.

Each member serves a term of 3 years, not to exceed 2 terms. APNAG candidates are required to submit a CV to APNAG and a letter of recommendation from their Nurse Executive .

**Members:**

- April Gerlock, ARNP Chair
- Janette Elliott, AOCN Co Chair
- Carol Einhorn, GNP, Archives
- Kathleen Burns, NP, VISN 1,2
- Nora Krick, ANP, VISN 3,4
- Joan Knox ,RNC, MSN VISN 5,6
- Mary Lovelady, CRNP, VISN 7,8
- Rebecca Waldon, FNP, VISN 9,10
- Mary Falls, APNP, VISN 11,12
- Deb Monicken, GNP, VISN 15, 23
- Nancy Cook, FNP, VISN 16-17
- Carolyn Anich, APRN, VISN 18,19
- Julie Marcum, MS, CS, VISN 20
- Mary Thomas, AOCN, VISN 21,22
- Anna C. Alt-White, RN, PhD ONS
- Brian Westfield, MSN, NP-C, Nurse Executive

**APNAG Members**

Mary Falls, Anna Alt-White, April Gerlock, Carol Einhorn



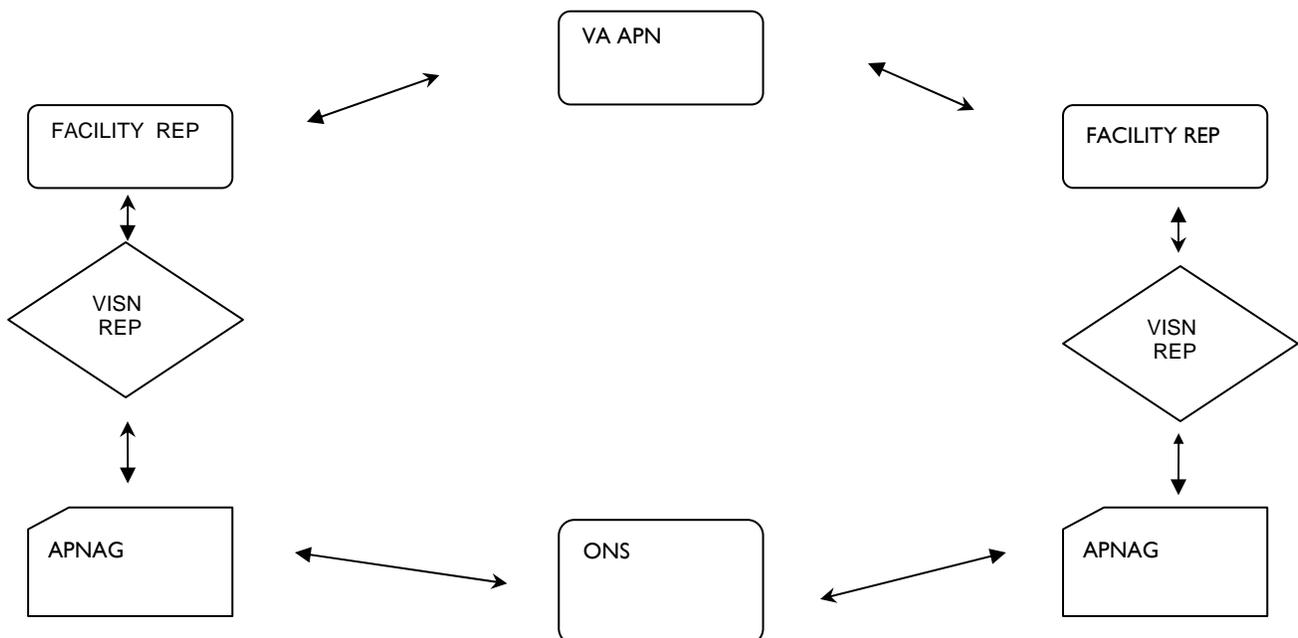
**VISN APN LIAISON REPRESENTATIVES**

Do you know your APN Facility Representative?

Do you know your APN VISN Representative?

If you don't you are missing out on an important link to communication and networking with the VA work environment and your peers.

Each month APN VISN Liaisons meet via teleconferencing to exchange information, concerns and news that may be specific to a region or nationally. Two members of APNAG serve as co chairs of this teleconference, Rebecca Waldon and Carolyn Anich. The APNAG members take the information from the liaisons to the APNAG council and vice versa. Each VISN Liaison Representative should be in touch with facility representatives and relay information to and from them to APNAG which then relays to the Office of Nursing Service. Contact your representatives!



## **RESULTS FROM APN CONFERENCE SURVEY**

Below are questions and responses from the APN Conference Survey Evaluations:

- 1) How often would you like an APRN conference held?  
Yearly : 59 ; every other year :26 ; other :6
- 2) Did you like the VA APN conference piggybacked with another conference?  
Yes :67; No :17; Either: 12
- 3) Would you like next conference to be piggybacked?  
Yes: 47: VHA: 20 ; Either: 12
- 4) What is a good length for conference?  
1-2 days: 69 2-3 days: 19 Other: 2
- 5) Would you want the conference held?  
Nationally: 61  
Regionally : 21  
VISN Wide: 8
- 6) Do you feel a web based or desktop program would be beneficial and would you make time to attend?  
Yes: 64 No: 25  
Monthly: 4 ; Bi-monthly: 6 ; Quarterly: 44 ; Yearly: 7
- 7) Do you feel V-tel or Pictel programming would be beneficial perhaps on at specific sites??  
Yes: 58 No: 23  
Monthly: 4 ; Bi-monthly: 6 ; Quarterly: 35 ; Yearly: 8

The APNAG will be reviewing all comments and take them into consideration. We will be looking at future conference planning but will take time. It is important to note that the conference funding came from the Office of Nursing Services this year. Watch for future information via communication from the APNAG on the COLLAGE website, the APN Newsletter and your APN Liaison Representatives.

Carol Einhorn

## **ADVANCED PRACTICE NURSING ADVISORY GROUP (APNAG) GOALS, PROJECTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

### GOALS:

- Promote APN Leadership
- Enhance APN Communication
- Monitor and Evaluate APN Practice Issues
- Increase Knowledge of Clinical Practice
- Promote Collaboration
- Create a Culture of Evidence Based Practice

### PROJECTS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Improved Communication among APN Liaisons, NNEC (National Nurse Executive Council ) and ONS
- APN representative on each NNEC Group
- Committee on Practice, Credentialing and Privileging Issues
- Task force on Salary Issues
- APN COLLAGE Website
- APN Newsletter, APN Toolkit , 1st APN Conference
- VA APN recruitment brochure revised
- APNAG and APN Liaison Charters revised

**APN NEWS AND REPORTS**

VISN 1 **Charlotte Ballew** was the recipient of the 2005 Secretary's Hand and Heart award for the VAMC Syracuse NY

VISN 4 **Mary Lou Bossio** published in the journal: *Advance for Nurse Practitioners*, December 2006 issue. The title of the article : Opioid Analgesics for Chronic Pain: Responsibilities, Implications and Ramifications.

**Christine Engstrom**, RN, MSN, CRNP, AOCN, VA Maryland Healthcare System and Christine Kasper, PhD, RN, FAAN, FACSM, USUHS Professor/Office of Nursing Services, recently published an article entitled, " Physiology and Endocrinology of Hot Flashes in Prostate Cancer, " in the *Journal of Men's Health*, Vol. 1, No.1, 2007.

VISN 8 **Kathryn G. Sapnas**, PhD, RN, CCRN, CNOR, Chief Nursing Education and Research, Miami VA Healthcare System, has co-authored an article for *Perioperative Nursing Clinics*, March 2007, Vol. 2, No. 1. The title is "Building a Business Case for the Advanced Practice Registered Nurse."

VISN 10 will hold the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Pharmacy Update for Local APNs in May 2007.

VISN 11 The 8<sup>th</sup> Annual CVS Symposium was held March 5 in Ann Arbor, Michigan. The symposium was free to VA employees.

**Sarah Otterness**, Nurse Practitioner (renal), Minneapolis VA Medical Center, published an article in the *Nephrology Nursing Journal*, November-December 2006:" Implications of Doctorate in Nursing Practice– Still Many Unresolved Issues for Nurse Practitioners."

Chicago- An article published by **Carol Einhorn, Diane Smith Newman, B.J. Reid Czarapata , Mikel Gray**, "Expert Review: Best Practices in Managing the Indwelling Catheter." *Perspectives*, Vol. 7. No. 1. September 2006. [www.perspectivesinnursing.org](http://www.perspectivesinnursing.org) (CEUS available online).

**Christine Mulligan**, CRN, MS, ANP, Phoenix VA Medical Center, published an article in the January edition of the *Clinical Advisor*, "Clinical Challenge: Fever, Weakness and Mental Confusion in an Elderly Woman: Case Analysis."

**Mary Sullivan**, Psychiatric/Mental Health Nurse/Forensic Nurse, VA Southeast Extension Clinic, Mesa, AZ, became a Fellow in the American Academy of Forensic Sciences (AAFS) on February 7, 2007. this is a first for a VA nurse. Ms. Sullivan joins one a few nurses in the AAFS to achieve this status.

San Francisco APN, Elaine Der announced a research article was published in the November 2006 issue of the *Federal Practitioner* " Measuring Wellness in a Staff Health Promotion Program." Authors: **Elaine Der, Marti Buffum, Carol Ceresa**".

**Jenice Guzman**, RN, MSN, Nurse Practitioner-GRECC, VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System, received the Excellence in Leadership Award, National Coalition of Gerontological Nurse Practitioners, October 2006.

VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System: **Sharon Valente**, APRN, PhD, FAAN, , Assistant Chief Nurse Research/Education, **Lillian Murray**, RN, Case Manager, Primary/Ambulatory Care, and **Diane Fisher**, RN, MSN, Clinical Nurse Specialist-Informatics published an article entitled, "adverse Drug Reactions and Allergies," in the *Journal of Nursing Care Quality*, October 2006.

**Kristin Kopelson**, RN, NP, Nurse Practitioner, Cardiology, published an article entitled, "Get to Know Your Colleagues," in the *California Association of Nurse Practitioners (CANP) Connection*, Vol. 19, No. 4, Fall 2006.