

Advancing Health Equity

One of WCN's key missions is to build health equity and to help ensure everyone gets what they need to be healthy so that health disparities don't exist, and we can all live our best lives.

It's becoming common knowledge that our health depends on way more than our genes or what our doctor or nurse does. It also depends on things like how much money we make, where we live, what our social support network looks like, and what we do to stay healthy. Coined the "social determinants of health (SDOH)," these "social" factors are about how a person interacts with the world.

The Washington Center for Nursing (WCN), has been active in this work for several years, starting with promoting nursing leadership.

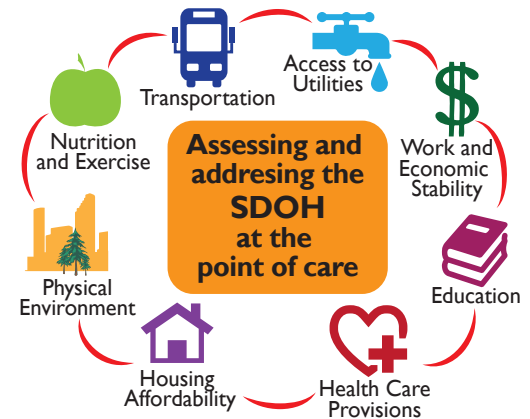
In 2019, with funding support from Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, WCN conducted nearly 40 focus groups on how SDOH are being screened for and addressed in care settings across Washington. We talked to nurses, physicians, home health aides, and social workers to get an idea of how they deal with their patients' social needs. We are still looking at our data – and it's a lot! But one emerging theme is even though

nurses have been doing this work at the point of care for quite some time, they may not be calling it "assessing and addressing the social determinants of health at the point of care."

Nurses are already working with social workers, community-based organizations, or sometimes just using the Google search engine to figure out how to help address their patients SDOH. They may not be asking standardized questions about housing, utilities, transportation, food, or social support, but they do build the type of rapport that opens up those conversations with patients.

Through our complete analysis, we hope to identify the barriers and opportunities for advancing this work while harnessing the expertise and experience of nurses. While resources to address social needs are difficult to find at times, we know that health outcomes still improve just with screening. We recognize that a caring approach itself is critical to health and well-being, and this is probably the reason why (tactful) screening matters even if resources aren't assured.

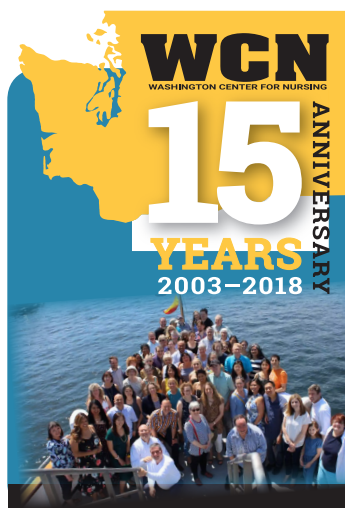
Moving into 2020, WCN is also talking to health care institutions about what they are doing to screen for social needs. However, our goal is not to question why it works, but to take a closer look at the mechanics in our



state. Our goal is to find out: 1) what institutions are asking, 2) how and when they are asking it, 3) how they respond when a patient has a need, 4) how they follow-up with a patient to see if they accessed suggested resources, and 5) what changes in health they see among those who are asked about their social needs.

The long-term vision is to determine what screening processes work best and gather best practices on connecting patients with needed resources.

WCN would like to say THANK YOU to all the facilities that hosted our focus groups and to all the participants. The feedback you shared is incredible, and we look forward to sharing what we learn with you in spring/early summer 2020... once we get through it all!



All aboard! In May 2019, several of WCN's board members, colleagues and supporters took to the water to help us celebrate our 15th anniversary. All had a great time as around 70 folks boarded the Virginia V for a cruise around Lake Washington and Lake Union. The event included a recap of WCN's key accomplishments and a silent auction with wine and cheese baskets, garden baskets, and even a vintage nurse doll, all donated by members of the WCN board and Trader Joe's to raise money for WCN.

WCN is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit created in 2003 in response to the Washington State Strategic Plan for Nursing to help address the need for nurses in our state.

To learn more about WCN and our vision to transform communities in Washington State through increased access to quality nursing care, visit wcnursing.org. Cheers to the years ahead!

Emerging Leaders in Nursing

An Interview with Zhuoying (Candice) Xia, BSN

Nursing is challenging. The path to becoming a nurse takes dedication, hard work and perseverance. For many, becoming a nurse is not just a career choice, it's a calling. That is true for Candice Xia, a 24-year-old nurse who moved to the U.S. on her own from China when she was 15 years old to study nursing.

Candice graduated with a BSN from Seattle Pacific University (SPU) in 2018 and currently works at the International Community Health Services (ICHS) Clinic in Shoreline.

WCN recently spoke with Candice to get her experience.

WCN: What inspired you to pursue a career in nursing?

Candice Xia: I have always been fascinated by the human body. It is an amazing thing and I wanted to know more about it. This, and being someone who likes working with people, led me to want a career in the medical field. Although I have no family members in health care, I always felt as though I wanted to work in this field. After talking to a few mentors and some friends in nursing, I decided that I wanted a career in nursing.

WCN: What are some challenges you've had to overcome to become a nurse?

Candice Xia: Even though you can become a nurse and practice nursing in China, it is different than in the U.S., and I decided at a young age that I wanted to come to the U.S. to study nursing. This is not a common path in China. Not many people decide to come to the U.S. to study nursing. They come to study other professions like engineering or computer science, but not necessarily nursing. I experienced many challenges navigating the system, but in the end, I did manage to open up opportunities for myself.

Once in nursing school, I had to overcome many challenges. Not having nursing mentors who also grew up in different cultures made it more difficult. There



was no one with a similar background or experience to my own to whom I could look to and ask questions when I was struggling.

WCN: Wow, you left your family and moved to the U.S. on your own when you were only 15 to pursue a career in nursing. What was that like?

Candice Xia: I was very lucky and lived with a good host family that was both supportive and kind. It was certainly difficult living with strangers, but the experience helped me to grow in so many ways. It helped me become more independent, taught me how to ask questions and gave me opportunities to learn American culture. I believe my experience deepened my empathy for people. And, although it was hard to leave my family, my family wanted this for me, too; they wanted me to have this experience.

Academically, I had to learn English and how to communicate my thoughts clearly. Eastern culture tends to be more reserved than Western culture, so I had to learn how to share more of my thoughts. This has helped me as I work with patients. The clinic where I work serves a variety of people including low-income families, immigrants, homeless populations, and patients struggling with addictions. There are not many Chinese nurses here but combining my Eastern culture with Western medicine gives me

a different perspective and I have learned to listen without judgment. I respect what my patients think and believe, which in turn allows us to have very open and effective discussions on what their best care might look like.

WCN: What do you enjoy most about being a nurse?

Candice Xia: I really like working in the outpatient community clinic setting. My journey to becoming a nurse had a lot to do with where I decided to work after finishing school. I enjoy building relationships with my patients and seeing their progress, making care plans, and teaching my patients how to take care of their health at home. There are more options in nursing than hospitals. We get to know our patients more intimately and see them not just as patients, but as mothers, fathers, sons, daughters, grandparents, and more. Seeing our patients in their multiple roles means we can give more holistic, whole-person care.

As nurses, we also know a patient's health does not always improve. I feel honored to be part of a team of caring people who are there for someone at such a sensitive time in their life. For example, when someone is struggling with addiction and they relapse, knowing that they trust me and the team of professionals I work with enough to reach out to us for help is very fulfilling and really such an honor.

Chronic illness is also a reality for many people. I enjoy educating patients about ways to manage their chronic illnesses to improve their quality of life.

WCN: Why do you think diversity is important in the nursing workforce?

Candice Xia: Diversity is so important in the nursing workforce because people of different cultural backgrounds bring a set of unique experiences to the profession. Having more perspectives in nursing means we are looking at issues from a broader view and increasing the potential for creative solutions to difficult problems. Too much uniformity in nursing increases the chances that something might be overlooked or missed when caring for a patient.

Here in Seattle, the population is very diverse, which is also true across the U.S.. A nursing workforce that better reflects the population means better health outcomes for all patients. Quality of care, how to navigate health care sys-

tems, understanding cultural nuances in patients... all these interactions improve when there is more diversity represented in nursing.

WCN: What's next for you?

Candice Xia: I am currently back at SPU studying for my Doctorate of Nursing Practice degree. I would like to do more for patients, so I want to be a nurse practitioner. Right now, I am limited in what I can do. I want an advanced degree so I can be a stronger voice at the table when advocating for my patient's care.

I am also a member of the Pacific-Northwest Chinese Nurses Association (PCNA), and starting in 2020, I will be the chair of the community outreach committee. In this role, I want to invite more international students to consider nursing as a career and to create stronger support systems for those already enrolled in nursing programs across Washington. I also want to help create more health care resources and educational outreach

information for the community. Building partnerships with other organizations to strengthen the voice of Chinese nurses in health care will also be an important part of the work I do as chair of the outreach committee.

And finally, I would like to say thank you to SPU, ICBS and PCNA for providing me with so much support and encouragement and for inspiring me to bring more diversity into the nursing workforce.

NURSES OF TOMORROW

Part of our mission at WCN is to promote nursing as a career to younger generations. Here is what we've been up to.

On October 16, WCN, the Executive Director of the Samoan Nurse Organization of WA, Siniva Driggers, RN, nursing students from Highline College, and Highline Nursing and CNA Program Director, Steven Simpkins, PhD, RN, attended the Healthcare Industry Leadership Table (HILT), Charting Your Path to a Healthcare Career fair held at the Sea Mar Museum in Seattle. Over 450 Seattle area students attended the event to learn about careers in healthcare including nursing.



On November 1, WCN, nursing students from Tacoma Community College and Associate Dean of Nursing at TCC, Julie Benson, MHA, MN, CNE, ARNP, attended Tahoma High School's Future Ready Day and present to interested students about choosing a career in nursing.



YEAR OF THE NURSE AND MIDWIFE

2020 is the year of the nurse and midwife!
And WCN will be celebrating by sharing facts, milestones, and stories of incredible nurses and midwives now and throughout history!

Join the fun by reading our newsletter and following us on Facebook, LinkedIn, or Instagram and help us honor nurses and midwives everywhere!



SO YOU WANT TO BE A PROFESSOR WORKSHOPS



WCN is excited to announce we have received funding from the Premera Foundation to expand the *So You Want to Be a Professor* workshops.

WCN piloted a *So You Want to Be a Professor* three-day workshop in May of 2019. The goal of these workshops is to increase interest in nursing education as a career, particularly among under-represented students and practicing nurses. With funding from the Premera Foundation Grant, the program will be enhanced to also reach students and nurses interested in behavioral and mental health.

From experienced nursing faculty who represent diverse populations or have experience in nursing workforce diversity and health equity, students learned about how to build a career path towards nursing education, the unique aspects of nursing education as a career, degree requirements, and the variety of practice environments. Workshops were held at a community and technical college (Green River College), a public research university (University of Washington-Seattle), and in a four-year

private university (Seattle Pacific University). Participants completed a simple evaluation and feedback was very positive. Faculty and students urged WCN to repeat the workshop.

Faculty involved in the pilot will serve as trainers for future workshops in central and eastern Washington. WCN has done outreach through the network of Deans and Directors of Nursing Programs known as the Council on Nursing Education in WA State (CNEWS) for schools interested in participating in the *So You Want to Be a Professor* workshop. In addition, the University of Washington Center for Health Workforce Studies is interested in working with WCN to develop a program evaluation, which seeks to measure the change in participant's interest in nursing education as a career and provide guidance on program improvement.

So You Want to Be a Professor comes from the work of the WCN Diversity Advisory Committee. They are an advisory committee of leaders from state ethnic nursing organizations: Mary Mahoney Professional Nurses Organization for

Nurses of African Heritage, the Western Washington Chapter of the National Hispanic Nurses Association, and the Filipino and Professional Health Care Association of Washington. Most recently, the Pacific Northwest Chinese Nurses Association and the Samoan Nurses Association have joined. We also invite nurse scholars in the area of equity and diversity. This committee is key to developing strategies to increase nursing diversity in nursing education.

Thanks to the many schools that have expressed interest! Our next step is for the *So You Want to Be a Professor* faculty and the WCN Diversity Advisory Committee to meet with the schools interested in the next phase of the program planned for 2020.

If you are interested in transitioning into a career as a nursing educator, we look forward to updating you on the dates and locations of the 2020 workshops once we have them finalized. If you have any question about the workshops, please contact Frank Kohel: frankk@wcnursing.org

Strengthening the Nursing Educator Workforce: Action Now!

A*ction Now!*'s work to address the nursing faculty shortage in Washington State took a major step forward in 2019. In the Washington State Legislative Session, \$40 million was appropriated to increase nurse educator salaries. HB 2158 reflects an approximate 26.5% salary increase, is aligned with the need determined by the *Action Now!* Steering Committee and was advocated for by the Washington State Nurses Association (WSNA), the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) 1199NW, and the United Food & Commercial Workers (UFCW) 141 Nursing Union.

The Workforce Education Investment Act, HB 2158, directly addresses what nurse educators have consistently found to be the most challenging issue associated with faculty recruitment and retention – pay that is dramatically lower than other nursing practices and what first year nurses earn in a hospital setting. The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges is

responsible for allocating the funds to nursing programs, after which individual colleges will implement salary increases through the collective bargaining process with the faculty union at the college. Schools are working to complete this process and many have completed the process.

Additionally, *Action Now!* supports equitable salaries for nursing faculty in 4-year colleges and universities to ensure strong nursing programs at all levels.

The *Action Now!* movement is spearheaded by the WCN, the Washington State Nursing Care Quality Assurance Commission (NCQAC), and the Council on Nursing Education in Washington State (CNEWS). WSNU, SEIU 1199NW, and UFCW 141 provided analysis and legislative advocacy to help secure the additional funding for nursing faculty salaries. Please feel free to email us at ActionNow@wcnursing.org if you have any questions.



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