

Partners in **NURSE ADVANCEMENT**

OUR MISSION PharMerica and NADONA are teaming to provide new resources, education, and information along with additional insights from DONs and Pharmacy Consultants for improved outcomes, care excellence, and a bright future for nurses.

What is your role at NADONA?

I am the current president of NADONA. I've been with the organization since 2006.

What brought you to NADONA?

I became a director of nursing in 1997 in Baltimore, Maryland. I worked in an area where there were 25 nursing homes within five miles, yet I didn't know another director of nursing in any of them. My administrator encouraged me to join a smaller tri-county DON association. Because I didn't have mentors or a support system, I thought there were going to be all these people who would teach me how to do my job. Instead, within a few months, I was their president.

I found out about NADONA when another member of the tri-county group had gone to a NADONA state chapter meeting. They suggested we join because their statewide and national presence meant they had more resources than our small group of DONs in three counties in Maryland. I joined and sent the president an email saying, "if you ever need help with anything," and the rest is history!

What does NADONA's mission mean to you?

It's really about connection and providing a support system with mentoring, training, and education. When I first started, I didn't know any other DONs, they didn't know me, and we didn't talk to each other. When I first started going to meetings and met other nurse leaders, I started feeling normal – I realized the problems I was having weren't unique. Just knowing that others were facing the same challenges was like having a support group. I knew that I had someone I could talk to, someone I could pick up the phone and call, even it was just to hear "it's going to be okay."

continued on page two



"We're recognizing that it's not just a career ladder – it's a career lattice. There are opportunities in all different directions and nurses need to be able to grab all the bits and pieces they need to build their careers."

– Robin Arnica
RN, FACDONA, IP-BC
NADONA President

To learn more about how PharMerica is supporting DONs, other nurse leaders, and nursing staff in skilled nursing, visit PharMerica.com/who-we-are/nurse-advancement.

Partners in **NURSE ADVANCEMENT**

How is NADONA helping nurses advance their careers?

Any good leader has a succession plan in place. NADONA not only continues the education of today's nurse leaders, but it starts preparing future nurse leaders. We do that through certifications, from helping bedside nurses be the best they can be to helping them build a more advanced skill set with certifications in areas like infection prevention or QAPI.

In skilled nursing today, to be a DON only requires you to be an RN – there's nothing that says you have to be prepared to be the DON in any other manner. We know it's a specialty and we want to meet the needs of that specialty. You can become certified to be a director of nursing or become a fellow of the academy of certified directors of nursing. We're recognizing that it's not just a career ladder – it's a career lattice. There are opportunities in all different directions and nurses need to be able to grab all the bits and pieces they need to build their careers. Again, we're helping our current nurse leaders be the best they can be, but we're also looking down the bench for that strength and to start building those nurses up.

How is NADONA helping to address nursing shortages?

Director of nursing turnover, as a result of the nursing shortage, is significant and it's a vicious cycle. The facilities that have the most stable staff have stable leadership, but you can't have stable leadership without stable staff. The DONs are burning out and they're leaving. When the leader has to also be the bedside nurse, they can't teach and do anything to correct the staff shortage.

What we're really talking about is helping nurse leaders find their voice – to advocate for themselves. They need to be able to say, "If you want me to work on recruitment and retention, I have to do my job as a nurse leader." We're helping DONs recognize their role. Yes, you're a nurse, but they've got stop having you pass meds and do wound care. You were hired to look at mission, vision, and strategy and to identify problems and fix them. It's about helping them become not just the best director of nursing, but the best leader and advocate – and that starts with advocating for self.

What Impact does NADONA have on the health and well-being of long-term care residents?

There is a clinical side and a leadership side. On the clinical side, we invest in teaching best practices and evidence-based clinical care. Helping nurse leaders build their skills through certifications also has a direct effect on resident care. For example, when a nurse leader truly understands QAPI, they can see not just the problem, but the root cause of the problem. They understand all the factors that impact the situation and can get to real solutions, whether it's an improvement in process or performance.

Why is the partnership between NADONA and PharMerica important?

PharMerica gets us and they're supportive of what we're trying to do. Our goal is the same – at the end of the day it's about high-quality care for our residents. PharMerica recognizes that if you're going to provide good clinical care to residents, you need good leaders to oversee it.

We know that if the director of nursing can take good care of their staff, the staff will provide good care to the residents. PharMerica is right there, too. For example, they've been sponsoring scholarships with us for many years. The scholarship recipient could be a nursing assistant who's going to nursing school and could someday be one of our nurse leaders. They're helping us seed the soil.