

August 18, 2011

American Academy of Nursing Applauds the Center for Disease Control “Testing Makes Us Stronger” Campaign

Washington, D.C. (August 18,2011) – The American Academy of Nursing (AAN) applauds the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on their new national public education campaign “Testing Makes Us Stronger” that promotes the benefits and importance of HIV testing among black gay and bisexual men. In December 2010, the American Academy of Nursing Expert Panel on Emerging and Infectious Diseases released a policy brief amplifying the public need for routine testing for HIV infection. The policy brief calls for the adoption of the 2006 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations supporting routine HIV testing in all health care settings and streamlining the administrative operations of widespread testing.

The nursing profession, the largest segment of the health care workforce, historically has been at the forefront of solving health care issues that affect the community. Furthermore, the Academy’s policy brief touts the critical leadership role of nurses relative to implementing widespread infrastructure changes, which will ultimately decrease transmission of HIV and reduce the percentage of individuals infected with HIV (24-27 percent) who are unaware of their status.

The policy brief can be viewed online at <http://www.aannet.org/files/public/EIDPolicyBrief.pdf> .

“HIV screening of individuals who do not know their HIV status is a critical element in the prevention of HIV transmission across families and communities,” said Emerging and Infectious Diseases Expert Panel Co-Chair Rosanna DeMarco, PhD, PHCNS-BC, ACRN, FAAN. “At the center of the solution are nurses willing to build consensus between neighborhoods, centers of health care, and health care providers to find the best solution to make routine testing a reality.”

Knowing one’s HIV serostatus helps infected individuals with HIV adopt risk-reduction behaviors and access life-prolonging medical treatment while helping uninfected individuals maintain

behaviors that reduce the risk of infection. Despite these facts, 54 percent of new infections are driven by individuals unaware of their HIV status. According to the brief, the 2006 CDC recommendations have not reached target benchmarks.

The AAN Expert Panel on Emerging and Infectious Diseases cites numerous pieces of evidence that support scaling up testing efforts across health care settings. Utilizing nurses as an integral resource for carrying out the CDC target goals, the expert panel lists 10 recommendations to guide future implementation, among them: 1) identifying knowledge deficits among health care providers, especially in primary care regarding the CDC recommendations; 2) urging nurses to get involved where state legislation is pending that would change the written informed consent laws that currently exist; 3) creating institutional interdisciplinary teams to develop specific implementation and evaluation plans to operationalize the CDC recommendations in hospitals and clinics; and 4) developing state-by-state coalitions to address HIV testing issues with local legislators and health care decision-making bodies through the American Academy of Nursing, Association of Nurses in AIDS Care and the American Public Health Association.

The Emerging and Infectious Diseases Expert Panel is comprised of 52 nurse leaders in practice, research, education and administration. It is led by Co-Chairs DeMarco and Joe Burrage, Jr. PhD, RN, FAAN, and previous Co-Chair Michael Relf, PhD, RN, APRN, BC, AACRN. Academy expert panels embody the organization's mission to advance health policy through the generation, synthesis and dissemination of nursing knowledge.

“The American Academy of Nursing is encouraged by the “Testing Makes Us Stronger” campaign launching late next month in Atlanta, Baltimore, Houston, New York, and Oakland,” said AAN CEO Cheryl G. Sullivan, MSES. “The Expert Panel on Emerging and Infectious Diseases in their policy brief highlighted the importance of identifying individuals who are unaware of their HIV serostatus and the leadership role nurses can provide across the country in advocating for the adoption of the 2006 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendations to develop a system of routine testing for HIV infection would save countless lives.”

Contact: Kat Piscatelli
(202) 777-1174
kat_piscatelli@aannet.org

###

The American Academy of Nursing (www.aannet.org) anticipates and tracks national and international trends in health care, while addressing resulting issues of health care knowledge and policy. The Academy's mission is to serve the public and nursing profession by advancing health policy and practice through the generation, synthesis, and dissemination of nursing knowledge