



where NURSING, MINISTRY and CATHOLIC MISSION meet

October 27, 2017

Department of Consumer Affairs
Board of Registered Nursing
P.O. Box 944210
Sacramento, CA 94244-2100

Re: Withdrawal of CE credits for the Abortion Pill Reversal Program

Dear Members of the California Board of Registered Nursing (BRN):

The National Association of Catholic Nurses, U.S.A. (NACN-USA) is the national professional organization for Catholic nurses in the United States. A non-profit group of hundreds of nurses of different backgrounds, the NACN-USA focuses on promoting moral principles of patient advocacy, human dignity, and professional and spiritual development in the integration of faith and health within the Catholic context in nursing. As leaders in the NACN-USA with many members licensed in the state of California, we would like to express our concern about your recent withdrawal of continuing education units for an Abortion Pill Reversal program.

On September 1, 2017, the California BRN, withdrew approval of continuing education units previously awarded to Heartbeat International for abortion pill reversal education based on the claim that the content was not relevant to the practice of nursing. Given that approval already had been granted by the BRN, this is a perplexing reversal of opinion. In a spirit of collegiality, the NACN-USA reminds the BRN that knowledge on this topic is of great relevance to the practice of nursing, as women's health has always been a concern of nursing. Having such knowledge is, in fact, a responsibility of nursing, as described in the 2015 American Nurses Association Code of Ethics as it relates to the right to informed consent and to respect for the patient and the patient's right to self-determination.

Provision 1.4 of the Code states that "Patients have a right to self-determination...the moral and legal right to determine what will be done with and to their own person; to be given accurate, complete and understandable information in a manner that facilitates an informed decision; and to be assisted with weighing the benefits, burdens and available options in their treatment, including the choice of no treatment" (p. 2). As the BRN is aware, patients regularly look to nurses for information and, by educating patients about their condition and treatment options, nurses play a key role in the informed consent process and must have the knowledge to do so.

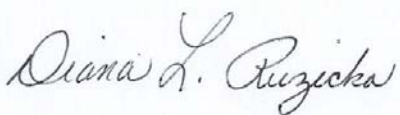
The right to informed consent includes the right to change one's mind. This is not uncommon in health care and, in such cases, the nurse's responsibility in the informed consent process does not change. Just as with any situation in which a patient changes their mind, when patients have second thoughts after taking an abortion inducing drug, they have a right to know what options are available to them. Again, nurses have a responsibility to be knowledgeable about such options.

To knowingly withhold information that is relevant to patient decision-making or to remain ignorant about a topic relevant to nursing practice, would violate the Code of Ethics in that it would not only impede the informed consent process and infringe on the patient's right to self-determination but also would violate the "fundamental principle that underlies all nursing practice [namely] respect for the inherent dignity, worth, unique attributes, and human rights of all individuals" (Provision 1.1, p. 1).

Such actions would erode the trust essential to the professional nurse-patient relationship. "Nurses establish relationships of trust and provide nursing services according to need, setting aside any bias or prejudice" (Provision 1.2, p. 2). Nurses can only continue to be rated the highest in honesty and ethical standards if we uphold the ethical standards set forth by our profession.

The NACN-USA urges the BRN to reconsider their rescindment of continuing education units for education on abortion reversal. Having such knowledge is a responsibility of nursing so that we might uphold the ethical standards of informed consent, respect for the patient's right to self-determination, and respect for the dignity of patients, standards that patients have come to expect from the nursing profession and the nursing profession owes to patients.

In His Holy Name,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Diana L. Ruzicka". The signature is written in black ink on a light blue background.

Diana L. Ruzicka, RN, MSN, MA, MA, CNS-BC
President, National Association of Catholic Nurses, U.S.A.