



Living in uncertain times: Nurses on the front line

By Mary Jo Kreitzer

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On January 24, 2026, Alex Pretti, a 37-year-old intensive care nurse at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center, was murdered on the streets of Minneapolis by federal ICE agents. Prior to this, Renee Nicole Good, a 37-year-old writer, poet, and mother was killed as she, like Alex and others, was a community member observing and capturing video, being present, and bearing witness. The Governor of Minnesota¹ has described what is happening in the state as a campaign of “organized brutality against the people of the state”² – circling schools, staking out hospitals, and stopping drivers based on the color of their skin. Residents describe the feeling as living under occupation. There is much more to say about what is happening in Minnesota and in other communities around the United States, however, stress and uncertainty remain a common theme.

As nurses, it is good to remind ourselves that these are not normal times. It is important to acknowledge the reality of the moment and to name it for what it is. It is hard, frightening, and uncertain. Truly, our only choice is how we move through this time. As nurses, we show up at times like this for our patients, our neighbors, our families, and our communities. As integrative nurses, we have knowledge and skills we can draw upon to help people who are dealing with stress, fear, anxiety, anger, and trauma.

Trauma, both acute and enduring, is a very real danger. It is a response to an experience that overwhelms our ability to cope. It is not defined by what happens, but rather how the experience is held in the body, mind, and nervous system. Trauma is what happens inside us as a result of what happens to us. Most concerning is the long-term cellular impact that traumatic stress has on gene expression and cellular function.³ These consequences are silent, often unrecognized and under-emphasized, but with the potential to impact generations to come. And yet, it is this trauma that calls nurses to action.

So how do we heal?

Traumatic stress significantly affects not only those we care for, but also ourselves as we care for those who have suffered traumatic experiences. When you hear the word healing, you may be picturing something deeply personal – one person, one body, one heart. And that is important. But healing is also communal. It happens between us, among us, and because

of us. Communities are tired and beyond weary. They have been carrying the weight of loss, division, uncertainty, anger, fear, and chaos. Yet, people are still showing up, still caring, still hoping. That, in itself, is resilience.

Resilience isn't about being unbreakable. It's about being bendable. It's how we respond, how we repair, reconnect, and reimagine together. Healing communities begins with belonging. People heal best when they feel seen, heard, and valued. A resilient community is not one without problems; it's one where people know they matter to each other. A place where differences are held with curiosity instead of fear.

One of the most powerful healing forces we have is connection. Simple, human connection. Listening without fixing. Showing up without judgment. Creating spaces—formal or informal—where stories can be shared and emotions can be named. When we listen to each other's stories, we don't just exchange information – we share humanity.

Resilience grows when we shift from asking, "What's wrong with this community?" to "What's strong here?" Communities have assets—wisdom, culture, creativity, compassion, and energy—that emerge in times of stress so healing can begin. Healing doesn't mean ignoring pain. It recognizes strength alongside pain.

Healing communities requires hope with action. Hope is not passive. It's built through small, consistent acts of kindness and courage. A neighbor checking in. Bringing food to people who are afraid to leave their homes. Monitoring our neighborhoods. Escorting children to and from school. Handling difficult conversations with respect. Having systems that prioritize dignity and equity. These actions accumulate. They matter.

We also need to make room for grief. Healing doesn't require us to rush through loss or pretend everything is fine. Resilient communities honor grief as a natural response to loss and hardship. When grief is acknowledged, it softens. When it's ignored, it hardens.

A few concrete steps that you can offer people and for your own reflection and self-care:

- Connect with others. This is an important time to invest in relationships. Talk about what you are experiencing and feeling and deeply listen to others' lived experiences. Processing our experiences with others helps us gain insight and move through them.
- Learn simple practices to help regulate your body and support your wellbeing.
- Find meaningful moments throughout the day. Many people are finding purpose and meaning in how they are supporting others. Big actions and little actions are needed.

Finding purpose and meaning as we move through difficult times can help sustain us.

At the University of Minnesota's Earl E. Bakken Center for Spirituality & Healing, a free microsite for the public called You Do Matter Minnesota: Living Through Crisis (<https://sites.google.com/umn.edu/you-do-matter-minnesota/you-do-matter-minnesota-home>) was created to begin the process of connecting and healing. It is a support hub that provides

easily accessible information about personal and collective trauma and simple practices that people can learn to help manage stress, build resilience, and support wellbeing. In times of crisis, people don't have time to read a book, attend a class, or watch a long video, so we have curated resources people can easily access on their phone or computer.

- Short videos, articles, and guided meditations are available on many topics including:
 - Trauma
- Anxiety
- Being real vs. toxic positivity
- Dealing with difficult emotions
- Dealing with angry people
- Grief and loss
- Managing stress
- Self-compassion

These resources are free and easily accessible; you are welcome to share the link to the You Do Matter Minnesota site. You may even be inspired to create resources for healing within your own community.

Finally, healing communities requires us to remember that we belong to one another. Not because we are the same, but because we are connected. Our wellbeing is intertwined. When one part of the community hurts, the whole community feels it. And when one part begins to heal, hope ripples outward.

So, the question isn't, "Can our communities heal?" The question is, "How will we heal together and how we can we as nurses support this process?" We can do this by

Listening deeply.

Caring boldly.

Resting when needed.

Lifting up what's strong.



And by remembering that community resilience lives not in any one of us but in all of us.

I recently saw a photo from a memorial set up to honor Alex. A nurse left a stethoscope with a note which read, "We'll take it from here Alex."

If you have stories, innovations or data to share, please get in touch with us. Mary Koithan mkoithan@gmail.com Mary Jo Kreitzer kreit003@umn.edu

Mary Jo Kreitzer PhD, RN, FAAN is the founder and director of the Earl E. Bakken Center for Spirituality & Healing at the University of Minnesota where she also serves as a tenured professor in the School of Nursing. She has served as the principal investigator or co-principal investigator of numerous clinical trials focusing on mindfulness meditation with persons with chronic disease. Recent studies include the use of social technology to enhance healing and wellbeing and the impact of mindfulness on brain-computer interface performance. Dr. Kreitzer has authored over 150 publications and is the co-editor of the text Integrative Nursing: A Whole Health Perspective 3rd Edition published in 2025.

Declaration of competing interest: none

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[Google Scholar](#)
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PMID: 28944401; PMCID: PMC5907804
[View at publisherView in ScopusGoogle Scholar](#)

Retrieved 3/10/2026: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1550830726000364?dgcid=author>

Since 1995, the Bakken Center has been committed to advancing the health and wellbeing of individuals, organizations, and communities. There is a wealth of information for individuals and the community that can be accessed at <https://csh.umn.edu/>

February MNORN Member Recording: Secretary of State Steve Simon presented on the Importance of Getting Out the Vote Initiatives and Election Integrity (Non-Partisan)



Objectives:

- Understand the professional obligation that nurses have to participate in local and national elections and take steps to create an awareness among other nurses of the importance of voting.
- Examine the steps the state of Minnesota takes to ensure election integrity.
- Identify resources that support get-out-the-vote initiatives and information about election integrity.

“Nurses are patient advocates, providing compassionate and effective clinical care. We center wellness and justice, and we contend with social factors that cause health disparities. But when it comes to representing these ideas in America’s most important policy conversations, the otherwise confident nursing voice softens. **Nurses are among the least likely health professionals to vote.** How is it that we can so boldly support patient needs within clinical spaces but not outside of them? To build a healthy society nurses must connect key ideas, such as patient advocacy, to voting and include civic engagement as part of our practice. For those who are eligible, a commitment to regularly vote in local, state, and federal elections is consistent with core nursing values.”

from “A healthy democracy needs voting nurses” American Nurse, October 31, 2022.

“Nurses have a role at every level of the democratic process. This includes informed voting in local and national elections; running for office; combating voter suppression; and working closely with local, state, and federal elected officials to develop, promote, and facilitate the passage of health and social policy change.”

9.5 National Policies, Programs, and Legislation, Code of Ethics for Nurses.(p.41)

Comments from evaluations:

What factors influenced your decision to attend?

- Voting is a huge issue right now with this administration trying to corrupt the vote.
- Previous involvement with MNA and ENA legislative groups.
- I was excited about having Secretary Simon join us
- CE, speaker
- It's important to support our professional organizations
- Speaker - Secretary of State, Steve Simon
- I prioritize attending these meetings each month. I was particularly interested in this speaker as well.
- The topic was so important to consider now, with the national events going on.
- Topic
- Interesting topic

Other comments:

- Mr. Simon's comments on the power nurses bring to issues since they are often factual with clinical experience.
- Thank Steve Simon and thank you for all your work.
- I was surprised by the data but encouraged by the dialogue before the talk.
- The steps the State takes to ensure election integrity were laid out clearly and easily understood.
- Always great discussions and presentations during our monthly meetings
- One of the most important and timely presentations I have attended
- Very practical and applicable information
- Thank you for an amazing session
- Good to hear again, thanks to everyone to make sure our elections are safe & secure!
- This was a wonderful presentation and topic for nursing!
- This is the second time I've heard Steve Simon speak, excellent at explaining his departments role. I think Minnesota citizens are lucky to have such responsible capable officials.
- Thank you for organizing this meeting!
- The timing for this meeting was perfect!
- It was wonderful having a speaker from outside the nursing profession as a nice change. The topic was so timely and relevant to nurses. Thank you SO much.
- Nurses need to be engaged in their communities. This was a good reminder of an important way that we all need to contribute.



HERE WE VOTE **What is a Voter 101?**

A Voter 101 is a one-hour informational session designed to educate your community about elections and voting in Minnesota.

HOW IT WORKS

- You host the session, either in-person or virtually.
- We deliver the content customized for your organization or community.
- Topics can cover a wide range of election-related subjects, with Q&A at the end.

WHY HOST A VOTER 101?

- Ensure your organization or community has what they need to participation in elections.
- Engage your audience in a meaningful, interactive way.
- Boost voter knowledge, participation, and turnout.

READY TO GET STARTED?

Contact Melanie Hazelip, Voter Outreach Director
 Email: melanie.hazelip@state.mn.us
 Call or text: 612-327-1621

Would you like to host a Voter 101 session for your community, organization, or business ahead of the 2026 midterm election? These sessions are a great way to share important voting information and help ensure people feel prepared and confident when it's time to vote. The Secretary of State's office would be happy to partner with you.

If you're interested in hosting a session, please contact Melanie Hazelip at melanie.Hazelip@state.mn.us.

Misinformation/Disinformation Resources on MNORN Website

[MNORN Statement on Misinformation/Disinformation](#)

[The Rise of Health Misinformation and Disinformation Recognizing the Truth](#) - article by Robin Austin and Katheren Koehn in "Minnesota Physician" October, 2025.

Fact Checking Sites:

General sites:

- [FactCheck.org](https://factcheck.org)
- politifact.com
- snopes.com
- apnews.com/ap-fact-check
- groundnews.org

Health related sites:

- [Johns Hopkins Health Alerts](#)
- [Mayo Clinic News Network](#)
- [Robert Wood Johnson Foundation](#)
- [Kaiser Family Foundation](#)
- [World Health Organization](#)

Vaccines Information:

- [Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy](#)
- [American Academy of Pediatrics](#)

Legislative sites:

- [Minnesota State Legislature](#)
- [US Congress](#)
- [GovTracker](#)



2025 AJN Book of the Year, HISTORY AND PUBLIC POLICY Category

Selected by Katheren Koehn, MA, RN, FAAN, executive director, Minnesota Organization of Registered Nurses

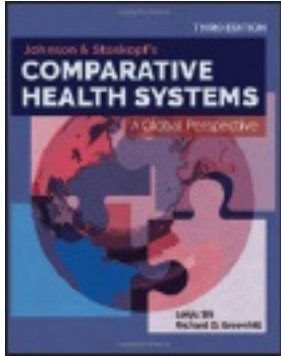


FIRST-PLACE WINNER: *Margin over Mission: When Private Equity Owns Your Hospital.* By James Kelly. Baltimore, MD, Johns Hopkins University Press.

It is a rare thing for me to want to read a health policy book in one sitting, but when I picked up *Margin over Mission*, I could barely put it down. James Kelly, an ICU nurse, describes the economics of private equity and its impact on patient care, using his own experiences as a caregiver as illustration. In telling the story of his hospital's failures, you can feel his moral distress and the moral distress of his colleagues.

This is truly a compelling read. While the business model of private equity is the culprit of this story, it could be the story of any health system that puts margin over mission. If we don't understand the financing of health care, we will not be able to make the changes our health care system so desperately needs. This book is important as it links financing motivation to changes in care, both small and large, that can have dire impact on both care recipients and caregivers.

SECOND PLACE: Johnson and Stoskopf's Comparative Health Systems: A Global Perspective. By Leiyu Shi and Richard G. Greenhill. 3rd edition. Burlington, MA, Jones and Bartlett Learning.



If you were going to redesign the U.S. health system, where would you start? You could start researching best practices from around the world, searching out countries on your own—or you could pick up this book and start reading. The health systems of 30 countries are explored, each in their own chapter. The country's history, government, and demographics are discussed along with a brief history of its health care system and an overview and evaluation of its present system. There are also broader chapters on health system challenges, innovations, and opportunities. Chapter 26, "Health Systems During Crisis and Disaster," is particularly interesting, highlighting different countries' responses to geophysical, biological, pandemic, and climate events.

THIRD PLACE: Health Policy: Assessment and Analysis in a Changing Landscape. Edited by Meng Zhao and Julie Hoff. Solana Beach, CA, Cognella Academic Publishing.



This book provides a framework for understanding what health policy is and why it is important. Each chapter builds upon the others, beginning with basic descriptions of key U.S. governance structures and moving on to health care legislation versus regulations; leadership principles for advancing policy; and assessment, gap analysis, and planning for interventions. While this might sound dry and esoteric, real-life examples of both successful and failed policies help the reader understand the significance of health policy and the nurse's role in creating policies with positive impact. Chapters include key terms, learning objectives, key concepts, and assignments and discussion board questions—very useful for faculty developing curriculum.

Retrieved 2/19/2026 https://journals.lww.com/ajnonline/fulltext/2026/01000/book_of_the_year_awards_2025.33.aspx

Planetary Health: A Virtual Global Conference for Nurses and Midwives - April 21 or 24

The Nightingale Initiative for Global Health, the Commonwealth Nurses and Midwives Federation, and the Planetary Health Alliance invite you to attend **Planetary Health: A Virtual Global Conference for Nurses and Midwives**.

“By adopting a planetary health lens, embracing trans-disciplinary collaboration, and centering equity and Indigenous knowledge, nurses can help shape a healthier, more just, and sustainable future for all life on Earth.” – International Council of Nurses

This global webinar will explore the essential connection between human health and the health of Earth's ecosystems—we cannot have one without the other. The practice and leadership of nurses and midwives are critical to restoring and sustaining both.

The conference will be held live across six global regions on April 21 and April 24. During the first half of the program, Dr. Teddie Potter and Dr. Heidi Honegger Rogers will introduce core concepts of planetary health and demonstrate how nurses and midwives can integrate these principles into practice and leadership. The second half will feature regional experts discussing pressing planetary health threats in their areas and highlighting effective, context-specific solutions for diverse practice settings.

To **learn more and register**, visit: [Planetary Health: A Virtual Global Conference for Nurses and Midwives](#).

Please share the attached flyer widely within your schools, workplaces, and professional networks.

MNORN is a sponsor of this conference, which means MNORN members have a discount on registration. The total cost with discount for this conference is \$20.00.

Discount code: MNORN12



REGISTRATION:



THIRD NURSING ETHICS DAY

Workshop

APRIL 8, 2026 1-5 PM
ST. CATHERINE UNIVERSITY,
CDC - BALLROOM



Guest speaker
MARSHA FOWLER



Guest speaker
MARTHA TURNER

Join us for a book signing/reception with Dr. Fowler. The workshop is under application review with the ANCC for **3.5 contact hours**. Open to nurses, nursing and health science students, educators, and healthcare professionals.

Supported by the GHR Foundation and Brennan Fund for Spirituality of Theology



2026 Nursing Research Day



The University of Minnesota's School of Nursing will be hosting the 2026 Nursing Research Day conference on **Friday, April 17** at McNamara Center on the UMN campus. The event is free and offers MN Board of Nursing CEUs. This year's theme is Inquiry, Equity, and Action: Harnessing Nursing Science for a Collective Impact on Health. Throughout the day, faculty, students, and community partners will lead concurrent breakout sessions along with an afternoon poster session showcasing findings from innovative research and evidence-based projects that improve health and quality care. This is an in-person event with selected online attendance options. [Registration is now open.](#)

[Dr. Katie Boston-Leary](#) will be our keynote speaker. She is the Senior Vice President of Equity and Engagement at the American Nurses Association addressing DEIAB and workforce challenges within the profession. She is a 2024 ICN Global Nurse Leaders Institute Scholar and was previously identified in Health Leaders Media as "One of Five Chief Nursing Officers Changing Healthcare". She also won the ICABA TD Bank 2023 Woman of Impact award, the 2024 Spectrum Circle Award for Innovation in Health and won the 2025 National Black Nurses Association (NBNA) President's Trailblazer Award. She was inducted as a Distinguished Fellow at the Academy of Diversity Leaders in Nursing with the NBNA, is a Fellow with American Organization of Nursing Leadership (AONL), the American Academy of Nursing (AAN) the Faculty of Nursing and Midwifery with the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland. Dr. Boston-Leary has conducted research on care delivery models, time allocation, nurses' well-being, racism and civilized oppression in nursing. She completed her PhD at Walden University in Health Services, obtained a dual degree MBA and MHA from the University of Maryland Global Campus and her bachelor's degree in nursing from Bowie State University in Maryland. She is a board-certified Nurse Executive and obtained a nurse executive leadership certificate from Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania.

Please join us.

Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) Project Firstline (PFL)

Rash Micro-Learn: What to Do When You See a Patient with a Rash

Join MDH Project Firstline's brief train-the-trainer session designed for those with infection control expertise or those who may lead infection prevention and control education. Participants will learn how to utilize Micro-Learn resources in team huddles, guide practical discussions, and help staff take daily actions to stop the spread of germs.

Train to lead. Use the tools. Make an impact.

Same training offered both days — register for the one that fits your schedule.

- Tuesday, April 21, 2026 | 1 - 1:30 p.m. CDT [Project Firstline Rash Micro-Learn \(4/21\)](#)
- Thursday, April 23, 2026 | 10 - 10:30 a.m. CDT [Project Firstline Rash Micro-Learn \(4/23\)](#)



Website: [MDH Project Firstline \(health.mn.gov/projectfirstline\)](https://health.mn.gov/projectfirstline)

PFL mailing list: [Subscribe to MDH Project Firstline Updates](#)

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