

ACA Healthcare Professional Interest Section Launches Its Mission — Together We Can Make a Difference

By Elizabeth F. Gondles



Correctional health is vital to the health of our nation. Corrections professionals must do their part to help eliminate health disparities. With its mission firmly in place, members of the American Correctional Association launched the new Healthcare Professional Interest Section (H-PIS) as well as the Health Care Certification Program last month at the 2007 Winter Conference.

Correctional health care professionals and providers, correctional leaders, security professionals, and the public health sector gathered at the conference in Tampa, Fla., to examine important health care issues relevant to the field. The conference helped to improve communication and operations between the treatment and security segments of corrections. The Winter Conference was an excellent opportunity to explore the most innovative developments, treatment and preventive practices in correctional health.

Security and treatment personnel within corrections recognize that collaboration creates opportunities to impact and improve the overall health of our nation. At the Winter Conference, health care professionals networked with their security colleagues, from top positions to line staff. Coming together with their counterparts in security to discuss specific workplace challenges and prevention and treatment strategies, fostered innovative ideas and solutions to important issues in correctional health and security operations.

Members of the H-PIS receive all the benefits of ACA membership and more. In addition to ACA's flagship magazine, *Corrections Today*, H-PIS members receive a subscription to *Correctional Health Today*, a biannual peer-reviewed journal designed specifically for correctional health profes-

sionals. They will also have access to a members-only section of ACA's Web site, which will include the online version of *Correctional Health Today*, discussion boards, links to important health care Web sites and organizations, position statements, and networking and mentoring opportunities. Members can also receive discounts on ACA's certification program, publications, conferences and workshops, and they can participate in dedicated health care training tracks and other special events at ACA conferences.

In Tampa, the H-PIS was inaugurated with special events for its members, including a welcome reception with ACA leadership, chapter and affiliate presidents, and other invited guests. A luncheon, featuring an address by Acting U.S. Surgeon General Rear Adm. Kenneth P. Moritsugu, followed the day's training events. A breakfast roundtable discussion of the Prison Rape Elimination Act of 2003 featured PREA Commissioner James Aiken as well as ACA President Gary Maynard.

Throughout the Winter Conference, more than 38 clinical health care workshops focusing on all aspects of health care delivery in corrections were presented. Some of the topics that were addressed included the future of correctional medicine, chronic disease management, infectious diseases in corrections, ethical issues, the aging prison population, use of psychotropic medication, suicide prevention and reducing medical errors.

The Winter Conference also saw the first health care designations available from ACA's Corrections Certification Program. This national program recognizes individuals as professionally qualified corrections practitioners and is designed to advance the overall knowledge level of practitioners in the corrections field, promote the capabilities of corrections professionals and

enhance the public's image of corrections personnel. The Certified Corrections Nurse (CCN) and Certified Corrections Nurse Manager (CCN/M) designations were awarded for the first time to candidates who successfully completed their certification exams.

Health care is an ever-growing and ever-changing field. Correctional health care is growing and changing as well. These developments are not only the concern of health personnel, they affect every single corrections professional — from line officers to wardens to agency directors. It is not a coincidence that the H-PIS and health care designations of the Corrections Certification Program were introduced at the Winter Conference. The theme of the conference was "Corrections, Community and Public Health." The workshops and events at the conference were a concerted effort on the part of ACA to shine a spotlight on health care and improve communication and operations across all facets of corrections. This focus on health care will continue this summer at the 137th Congress of Correction in Kansas City, Mo., Aug. 10–15, 2007.

Full coverage of the 2007 Winter Conference health care events will appear in the April issue of *Corrections Today*. For more information on the H-PIS and nursing certifications, please visit ACA's Web site at www.aca.org or call 1-800-222-5646, ext. 0129.

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