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NEWS RELEASE



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Safe Patient Handling

The American Nurses Association Urges Congress to Prevent Nurse Injuries *Rep. Conyers Working with Senate on National Standard for Handling Patients*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The American Nurses Association (ANA), Rep. John Conyers (D-MI), and health care safety experts urged health care employers to implement common-sense, comprehensive programs to protect health care workers from career-ending injuries, and safeguard patients from falls at a briefing today on Capitol Hill.

“Nurses and health care workers experience the highest rate of non-fatal occupational injuries and illnesses, including the manufacturing and construction industries. Every day, nurses and other health care workers suffer debilitating musculoskeletal disorders, due to manually lifting patients,” ANA President Pamela F. Cipriano, PhD, RN, NEA-BC, FAAN, told congressional officials. “In no other profession would we ask workers to lift 90 pounds or more without mechanical support. Nurses and health care workers should not be the exception.”

In an ongoing ANA survey, 42 percent of nurses said they are at a “significant level of risk” to their safety from lifting or repositioning patients, and more than half said they experienced shoulder, back, neck or arm pain at work. In a prior ANA [Health and Safety Survey](#), 62 percent of RNs indicated that suffering a disabling musculoskeletal injury was one of their top three safety concerns. And from 2011 through 2013, government figures show registered nurses ranked fifth of all occupations in the number of cases of musculoskeletal injuries resulting in days missed from work, with more than 11,000 each year, a rate that can be reduced considerably through widespread adoption of safe patient handling and mobility programs.

Health care safety experts emphasized that national legislation would signal a “true investment” and “true progress” in preventing injuries to health care workers and patients.

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“We understand how lives can be seriously ruined by on-the-job injuries,” said Rep. Conyers, noting that he is working with a senator on a companion bill and expects to introduce the measure by the end of June. “For nurses, nursing aides and orderlies, this is what happens, and it’s driving up the cost of health care. This is something we want to try to deal with.”

Rep. Conyers’ bill, the Nurse and Health Care Worker Protection Act, aims to reduce costly, potentially career-ending injuries and preventable harm to patients. The act is the only national legislation that has addressed safe patient handling and mobility. It will establish a national occupational safety standard that will eliminate the manual lifting of patients by direct-care RNs and health care workers through the use of modern technology and safety controls.

Jean Lucas, a retired RN from New Jersey, is one of those nurses who suffered a career-ending injury. While working on a maternal care unit for women with high-risk pregnancies, Lucas assisted a bariatric patient in pain by lifting her leg onto her bed. She felt immediate pain in her lower back. Diagnostics revealed herniated and bulging discs in her back and neck. Lucas can’t be sure if her injuries resulted from the one-time lift or if it was “just the straw that broke the camel’s back” after 24 years of lifting and moving patients and accumulated strains.

The Conyers bill will incorporate principles from *Safe Patient Handling and Mobility: Interprofessional National Standards*, a framework developed by an expert ANA panel for establishing a comprehensive program to eliminate the manual handling of patients.

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ANA is the only full-service professional organization representing the interests of the nation's 3.1 million registered nurses through its constituent and state nurses associations and its organizational affiliates. ANA advances the nursing profession by fostering high standards of nursing practice, promoting the rights of nurses in the workplace, projecting a positive and realistic view of nursing, and by lobbying the Congress and regulatory agencies on health care issues affecting nurses and the public.