About AAHFN

The AAHFN is a specialty organization dedicated to advancing nursing education, clinical practice and research to improve heart failure patient outcomes. Heart failure is our exclusive interest and passion. Our goal is to set the standards for heart failure nursing care.

We unite the full spectrum of nurses and other health professionals interested in heart failure. We serve as the interface for sharing ideas, translating research findings into practice and setting priorities for the future. We welcome and value all professionals involved in heart failure care. We focus on patients across all environments of care from the hospital, to the clinic, to home.

Definition of Heart Failure Nursing

Heart failure nursing is the provision of holistic care to the specific individual with Stage A through D heart failure due to any etiology. Heart failure nursing care can take place in any inpatient or outpatient setting and address the acute or chronic needs of patients and their support systems. Prevention can be viewed in relation to individuals, high risk families, the community and populations.

Mission Statement

The American Association of Heart Failure Nurses unites professionals, patients and caregivers in the support and advancement of heart failure practice, education and research, thus promoting optimal patient outcomes.

Vision Statement

To be the foremost nursing association across the heart failure continuum.
From the President

Dear Colleagues,

On behalf of the AAHFN Board of Directors, we take great pleasure in presenting to you the 2016 AAHFN Annual Report. The purpose of this report is to communicate an overview of the accomplishments and initiatives over the last year.

2016 has been an exciting year in continuing to foster relationships and collaborating with other organizations on a variety of levels to raise awareness of Heart Failure (HF). One example is the “Together in HF” campaign by Novartis to facilitate an online patient support network for the heart failure community. The AAHFN serves as a founding partner and is actively engaged in the online site. The Research Committee and a core group of volunteers collaborated and utilized an interdisciplinary approach to develop a survey of HF nurses around the country to evaluate if certification in the area of HF makes a difference in caring for patients. The results will be shared and disseminated at the annual meeting this June.

Continued advances in educational offerings were offered in 2016 for both nurses and patients, such as, the heart failure awareness week’s emphasis on Exercise and HF, including tip sheets to complement the module. We had our 5th annual Advanced HF meeting in Tampa and anticipate the launch of the Advanced HF book that complements this group of patients at the annual meeting. The Readmission Symposia has consistently been a success throughout the country. We are currently collaborating with other national organizations to help patients and caregivers navigate the issues around access to care. The AAHFN is the key resource for Heart Failure Nurses across the continuum of care. Our focus is to meet the growing needs of our members, and to continue leading nurses in heart failure care.

Please take a moment to review the activities and accomplishments of this past year. We encourage you to consider opportunities to engage and volunteer in AAHFN activities. We welcome feedback on how we are doing and new ideas on how to better meet your needs.

AAHFN’s continued success is a result of the tremendous support of many individuals. To our members, volunteers, industry supporters and staff, we would like to thank you for your continued support and in making 2016, an outstanding year. Together, we look to the future, as we continue to build on our success, in becoming the foremost nursing association across the heart failure continuum.

Cynthia J. Bither RN, MSN, ANP, ACNP, CHFN
President 2016-2017

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Education

12th Annual Meeting: Scottsdale, AZ – Shining New Light on Heart Failure

The 12th Annual Meeting was an incredible success with over 700 participants. The informative program provided a wide array of sessions to meet the varying needs of the membership. The meeting was an outstanding forum for the presentation of the latest information available on clinical care, treatment of patients and research in the field of Heart Failure provided in a multi-disciplinary and well balanced format. Four full days of excellent information regarding evidence-based treatment, pharmacology, device therapy, advanced monitoring techniques and management strategies of heart failure patients across the continuum. In addition, there were selected sessions on professional development, as well as a variety of oral and poster presentations regarding clinical innovations and research studies. Industry sponsored dinner symposia and product theaters were available.

Advanced Heart Failure Symposium – From Diagnosis to Treatment

AAHFN held the Fourth Annual Advanced Heart Failure Symposium in Tampa, Florida, the third weekend in January. This two-day symposium delivered an in-depth perspective of the treatment journey of the patient with advanced heart failure. Experts in the field supplied attendees with information on the most recent treatment recommendations including current medical, surgical and investigational therapies for patients with advanced heart failure. This meeting also provided attendees with perspectives on the management of patients who are not candidates for advanced heart failure therapies. The symposium was designed to meet the educational needs of RNs and NPs involved in the diagnosis and care of patients with advanced heart failure across practice settings. The meeting was attended by 106 people and concentrated on future perspectives in the management of advanced heart failure.

Heart Failure Readmission Symposium

Hospital readmissions continued to be an important topic across all of healthcare in 2016. Two 1-day symposiums were held. In the spring, AAHFN traveled to Philadelphia, PA, to present the first symposium. Over 100 attendees came to learn evidence-based strategies to reduce HF hospital readmissions. The second 1-day symposium was held mid-October in St Louis, MO. Over 70 attendees came to hear expert speakers and proven tools to reduce readmissions. These symposia help professionals with practical and applicable strategies.

Educational Activities

AAHFN is continuously looking to provide members with various ways to access learning opportunities and continuing education hours through live webinars, video cast, and recorded sessions.

In 2016, the Education Committee worked diligently to produce 4 live meetings, 7.25 CE for enduring activities. There are over 20 CEU activities posted for members to access for free through the Education Center.
Teach Back Method Videos

In 2016 the AAHFN Publications committee produced seven teach back videos to help HF nurses and their patients. The videos were developed to enhance the engagement of Heart Failure Nurses and patients with Heart Failure who are discharging from the hospital setting. When providing education and counseling, Heart Failure Nurses can incorporate the Teach-Back Method while supporting lifestyle behavioral changes. The seven videos included the topics of; weight management, low sodium diet, medication management, exercise and activity, symptom recognition and management and finally discharge and follow-up management. These videos are located on the AAHFN website.

The Connection – The AAHFN Newsletter

The quarterly newsletter continued to provide members with timely information covering crucial clinical areas of heart failure (HF) and challenges specific to nurses in multiple HF practice areas. Important topics covered through The Connection in 2016 included nursing research and strategies for success, rate and rhythm assessment and diagnostics, the heart at home and the role of home health care in treating patients with heart failure, and a recap of the 12th Annual Meeting. Three of the four issues in 2016 provided opportunities to earn continuing education (CE) credits after reading and completing the necessary steps on the AAHFN website. In addition to providing CE, The Connection includes four standing columns written by the Connection Committee.
Membership Highlights

Membership
As our organization continues to grow, now over 3,000 members, AAHFN continues to provide a wealth of benefits to our members. See the graph on page 8 for more information on the breakdown of membership. AAHFN continues to expand our presence in social media. We’re constantly looking for new ways to communicate to members. Please connect with us, if you haven’t yet already.

Heart Failure Awareness Week Campaign – Spices of Life! Healthy Living with Heart Failure
The campaign, Spices of Life! Healthy Living with Heart Failure, includes tips on keeping the flavor in meals while maintaining a healthy lifestyle. A cookbook filled with recipes to assist patients and caregivers with preparing healthy low sodium meals is available at no cost on the AAHFN website. Spices of Life! Healthy Living with Heart Failure helps patients to take an active part of managing their disease with these self-care tips. AAHFN is increasing awareness and encouraging communication between patients, caregivers, and their healthcare providers. The AAHFN patient education website provides information and easy to follow tip sheets to help live a more heart healthy lifestyle.

Advocacy
The Advocacy Committee has been busy researching and bringing pertinent topics to the forefront for AAHFN members to review. The committee encourages members to contact their senators on active bills before the US House of Representatives and the US Senate that directly impact nurses and their patients. Our members can see the position statements and bills endorsed by AAHFN on the website.

Awards & Honors

Congratulations to all of the deserved award recipients from 2016:

Distinguished Member Award
Jean Mau, APN, CHFN

Robin J. Trupp Scholarship
Laurie Bicknese, CHFN, RN
Certification Highlights

Certified Heart Failure Nurses (CHFN) (CHFN-K)

There are currently a total of 1,170 (clinical) certified heart failure nurses (CHFNs) and 17 (non-clinical) certified heart failure nurses-knowledge based (CHFN-Ks).

In total, 2,074 examinations have been administered (1st timers and re-takers) since June 2011. The pass rate is an average of 73%. The computer based test (CBT) continues to be the choice for many seeking the CHFN or CHFN-K certification. Over time, examination applications have been steady, with ~ 350 each year and as high as 481 in 2015. Most nurses who take the examination are being tested as their inaugural certification; very few nurses chose to take the exam as a form of re-credentialing; rather, they recertify through Option 1 – professional development.

Between June 2014 and December 2016, 1,386 people were tested using Exam 2 (1st revision). Overall, Exam 2 pass rates were lower than original exam passing rates (from 79% + prior to 2014, to 68% or lower with Exam 2). However, those nurses who needed to repeat the exam due to an initial failure had similar passing rates throughout time; pass rates were not affected by the exam offered.

In 2016, the AAHFN-CB and AAHFN BOD supported development of and received funding for a research study that could enhance the value of HF certification. The research study was initiated in 2017 and 605 RNs participated. Analysis is ongoing.

In late 2016 through spring 2017, an AAHFN-CB item-writing committee was convened to develop a new CHFN examination (Exam 3) that will be initiated as a pen & paper exam at the June 2017 annual conference examination date. Thereafter, the new examination will be offered as a CBT. AAHFN-CB members recommended that the content outline of the examination be revised BEFORE the next test revision period, by June 2019, in anticipation of a new item-writing committee launch in September 2019, that will lead to a June 2020 Exam 4 launch, due to (a) changing nursing roles with healthcare reform and (b) changes to guideline-directed medical therapies in HF, as evidenced by 3 “updates” (2013, 2016 and 2017) to AHA/ACC/HFSA HF management guidelines.

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