

## Society of Gastroenterology Nurses and Associates – Champions of the Gastroenterology Nursing Profession

a report by  
**SGNA**

In 1969, Marna L Schirmer, a registered nurse (RN) and the founder of the Society of Gastroenterology Nurses and Associates, Inc. (SGNA), was assisting gastroenterologists with procedures at Mount Sinai Hospital Medical Center in New York. Wanting to expand her knowledge and keep abreast of the latest technologies and techniques, Schirmer attended educational meetings of the professional association for gastrointestinal (GI) physicians, the American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy (ASGE). Seeing a number of other nurses in attendance, Schirmer realized the time was right for an organization dedicated to the gastroenterology and endoscopy nursing profession and began contacting gastroenterologists across the country to compile a database of nurses working in this specialty area. It is due to Schirmer's concerted efforts that SGNA was formed and held its first annual meeting in 1974.

GI nursing is a specialty practice area in which nurses and associates provide care to patients with known or suspected GI problems undergoing diagnostic or therapeutic treatment and/or procedures. The nurses and associates practice in physician offices, in- and out-patient endoscopy departments, ambulatory endoscopy centers and in-patient hospital units. GI nurses are licensed in their state of practice and generally have experience in medical-surgical nursing prior to electing to specialize.

In three decades, SGNA has grown from fewer than 100 to more than 7,500 members, 80% of whom are RNs, 8% licensed practical/licensed vocational nurses (LPNs/LVNs), 3% technicians, and the remainder are affiliate members including vendors, managers and consultants. These nursing professionals and associates share diagnostic techniques, collaborate on research projects, develop educational curricula for other professionals, and further their own learning in the field. Their collective efforts help to advance the safe and effective practice of gastroenterology and endoscopy nursing.

SGNA is the only national association for GI nursing and sets high standards for the profession through the Position Statements it publishes. Viewed as the 'gold standard' in the industry, SGNA's Position Statements cover topics such as:

- role of GI RNs in the management of patients undergoing sedated procedures;
- performance of GI manometry studies and provocative testing;
- role delineation of assistive personnel; and
- role delineation of the advanced practice nurse in gastroenterology/hepatology and endoscopy.

A complete listing of SGNA Position Statements can be found at [www.sgna.org/Resources/position.cfm](http://www.sgna.org/Resources/position.cfm)

Joining SGNA helps GI nurses enhance their professional growth and prepare for the future. With 62 regional societies, members can become active in SGNA close to home. The regional societies host meetings, conferences and special programs giving members the opportunity to earn continuing education contact hours while networking with like-minded peers.

In addition to regional societies, members benefit from the opportunity to join 17 Electronic Special Interest Groups (e-SIGs). The e-SIGs allow members to share practices and experiences within a sub-specialty and, because interaction is online, members have the luxury of participating when it is most convenient for them. Members of e-SIGs receive online access to new and archived newsletters and the e-SIG discussion forum. Belonging to an e-SIG offers excellent networking possibilities, as well as the opportunity to stay at the cutting-edge of new technologies, standards and practices. The current SGNA e-SIGs are:

- Advanced Practice;
- Ambulatory GI Practice;
- Associates;
- Capsule Endoscopy;
- Endoscopic Ultrasound;
- Endoscopic Retrograde Cholangiopancreatography (ERCP);
- Hepatology;
- Laboratory Management;
- Legislative;
- LPN/LVN;



- Manometry;
- Nurse Endoscopist;
- Pediatric;
- Pulmonary;
- Research;
- University; and
- VA (Veterans Affairs medical centers) nurses.

In addition to year-round electronic interaction, e-SIG members have the opportunity to meet in person each year at the SGNA Annual Course.

The Society's robust website at [www.sgna.org](http://www.sgna.org) features a wealth of information and resources tailored to the interests and needs of GI nurses and associates. Members can search the membership directory and resource guide, which provides a complete listing of members and their practice affiliations. This is the only national directory of nurses and associates involved in gastroenterology and endoscopy nursing. The website also allows members to update their own records, pay dues, register for events, and purchase educational and logo items from the SGNA Marketplace. As an exclusive service to members, all professional resources and practice reference materials are available at a discount of 50% or more. The website features the popular discussion forum and the employment network. SGNA members have access to employment opportunities in GI nursing settings across the country and the chance to post their résumé for employers to view. The SGNA website is truly a one-stop resource for all SGNA activities and information.

*Gastroenterology Nursing* is SGNA's acclaimed journal containing reports from the front lines of nursing. Peer-reviewed articles, editorial and case reports help nurses improve the quality of patient care and stay up-to-date with new procedures and therapies, pharmacology, SGNA guidelines and more. Published six times a year, *Gastroenterology Nursing* is provided as a benefit of membership and offers current resource and product reviews, as well as continuing education opportunities. Members also receive a subscription to *SGNA News*, a monthly print publication that includes course information, meeting dates, and leadership and board updates. Past issues of *SGNA News* are archived online, for future reference. For late-breaking news and updates that need to be communicated quickly, SGNA provides *e-Scope*, a monthly electronic newsletter delivered directly to members via e-mail.

SGNA's Annual Course is the premier educational and networking event for GI nurses and associates and draws

attendees from around the world. It is held every spring, the 2006 course will be in San Antonio from May 19–24, and it will offer more than 40 contact hours. The Annual Course is designed to provide the kind of continuing education members need and want—whether they are new to the field or seasoned 'veterans'. Optional pre-course sessions are available on May 19–21, with concurrent and plenary sessions being held May 21–24. Education is provided in the following topic areas:

- advanced practice;
- ambulatory/office;
- associate;
- management;
- pediatric;
- pulmonary; and
- research.

Experienced GI nurses may choose to obtain national certification in the specialty by satisfying specific practice requirements and successfully completing a written examination based on the extensive role delineation research study that defines areas of practice and sets the blueprint for the exam. The test is administered by the Certifying Board of Gastroenterology Nurses and Associates (CBGNA), an independent non-governmental agency established in 1986. Certified RNs earn the credential CGRN (certified gastroenterology registered nurse) and LPNs/LVNs earn the credential CGN (certified gastroenterology nurse). The certification recognizes professional achievements and promotes excellence in the specialty. The major goal of the program is to establish a high standard of competency among healthcare professionals employed in gastroenterology and endoscopy nursing. More information about CBGNA and the certification exam may be found at [www.cbgna.org](http://www.cbgna.org)

As the only organization to collectively meet the needs of this nursing specialty, SGNA and its membership are well-positioned to meet the challenges of the present and the future. ■

#### Contact Information

For more information about SGNA or gastroenterology/endoscopy nursing – or to join SGNA – visit [www.sgna.org](http://www.sgna.org) and [www.cbgna.org](http://www.cbgna.org) or call 800/245-SGNA (7462).