

# Mirroring the Diversity of Children

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Working as a nurse practitioner in pediatric cardiology, I was caring for an infant with single ventricle physiology who was hospitalized for several weeks. His preschool-aged sister would visit our hospital's playroom when she came to visit him. One day, she returned from the playroom, excited to tell me about meeting another patient's sibling. She joyfully said, "We had a great time coloring—she spoke Spanish, so I couldn't understand the words, but it's ok because she laughed in English."

The diversity of children in the United States continues to grow. In 2018, more than 20 million Americans between the ages of 0 and 18 years belong to a racial or ethnic minority group (United States Census Bureau, 2019). In 2018, the percentage of Hispanic children in the United States was estimated to be 26%, and 4% of children were foreign born (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2019a, 2019b). In addition, it is estimated that 21% of individuals over the age of 5 years between 2013 and 2017 spoke a language other than English at home (United States Census Bureau, 2018). However, our workforce struggles with gaps between the diversity in our practitioners resembling the diversity of the general population.

With predictions that by 2043, the U.S. population will be a majority of minorities, our efforts to diversify our workforce are paramount. There are compelling data to suggest that a diverse workforce affects patient safety, care coordination, care affordability, patient satisfaction, and access to care (Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, 2016; Sullivan, 2004). In addition, the Institute of Medicine (2010) called for more racial, ethnic, and gender diversity among nurses to improve quality of care and reduce health disparities. Others have also indicated that a diverse nursing workforce is essential for progress toward achieving health equity in the United

States (National Advisory Council on Nurse Education and Practice, 2013). Over a year ago, NAPNAP developed a diversity and inclusion taskforce, which has started to work on several initiatives, including taking a closer look at our nominations process to be more inclusive of a diverse candidate pool.

The definition of diversity has broadened to include religion, sexual orientation, gender, disability, geographic location, or country of origin. Data from the American Association of Colleges of Nursing reflect that student enrollment and graduation in baccalaureate and graduate programs lack minority representation, with 34% of master's students, 33% of research-focused doctoral program students, and 34% of Doctor of Nursing Practice students from minority groups (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 2019). I encourage each of you to think about what you can do to influence diversity in the workforce. Perhaps it is supporting pediatric-focused advanced practice registered nurses to move into diverse practice settings or new subspecialties. It may involve counseling potential nurses or those in earlier stages of education about the role of a pediatric nurse practitioner by providing career guidance and education. For some of you, this may be attainment of additional or advanced degrees in an effort to diversify your knowledge base and meet the increasingly challenging demands of a complex health care environment. You may consider obtaining more knowledge to strengthen your cultural competence to provide care that is sensitive to patients' unique cultural behaviors and practices. You may need to consider investment in being an active nurse scientist engaged in child health disparities research.

Improved data collection of minority groups in pediatric advanced practice nursing will support our ability to evaluate the current state of diversity in our specific role. We will need to continue to advocate for federal funding of programs and grants that support workforce diversity. Any action taken must be driven by evidence and be evaluated over time. Most importantly, it will be imperative to evaluate the outcome that an increasing diversified workforce has on care received by a range of pediatric populations.

As members of NAPNAP, I encourage you to explore diversity in advanced practice registered nurse roles and join

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alongside others in contributing to the development of a workforce representative of pediatric nurse practitioners from a variety of underrepresented groups. I hope we inherently honor and celebrate the diversity of our children by taking intentional and deliberate steps to address diversity within our workforce.

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