

## Senior Nursing Student

Please meet our senior nursing student, Mr Thomas Quartey. He is completing his final semester at LaSalle University in Philadelphia. Thomas will be officially done on August 7th with a BSN. He is currently employed as a Clinical Medical Assistant in Cardiology. We wish Mr. Quartey continued success in his endeavors and nursing career. Congratulations Thomas!



## NAGNF'S First Virtual Annual Conference a Success

NAGNF's first annual meeting was held virtually via Zoom on Saturday June 6, 2020. The theme for the conference: COVID-19: Current Impact and Beyond in Nursing drew a sizeable participation of 55 participants. The panelists Included our very own driven President Ms. Gifty Lano, MPA(c), BSN, RNFA, CNOR; charismatic NE Chapter President and Nurse Leader Ms. Matilda Adams, MPH, BSN, RN, NE-BC; Astute Nurse Educator, Informaticist and NE Chapter Treasurer Dr. Asri Byll, DNP, RN, CMSRN; and renowned Speaker, Board Certified Infectious Disease Specialist, Adjunct Professor, and Author, Dr. Bertha Serwa Ayi, MD, FACP, FIDSA, MBA. NAGNF's Communication/Newsletter Chair, NE Chapter Secretary and Clinical Instructor, Ms. Irene Ahorlu, MSN, CRNA was the dynamic moderator for the event. Also present were NAGNF's partners in Ghana, Mrs. Perpetual Ofori-Ampofo, the President of the Ghana Registered Nurses and Midwifery Association (GRNMA) and Mr. Felix Nyante, the Registrar of the Nursing and Midwifery Council of Ghana (NMC). The conference commenced on schedule at 2pm (EST) with the Ghana Anthem and was highly informative and engaging. Ms. Lano gave an overview of NAGNF and its goals. She also addressed the current state of affairs and successes of this young but formidable foundation. Successes included increased memberships leading to 4 active chapters and 2 more in formation and the publication of 3 newsletters, 1 every quarter. She highlighted NAGNF's collaborations with the NMC in Ghana (Mr. Nyante was the Keynote speaker at NAGNF's Fall Conference last year), new connections with the GRNMA, the US-Ghana Embassy (fund raising efforts for COVID-19 and first aid support during the Ghana Independence day celebrations on March 6, 2020), the Ghana Physicians and Surgeons Foundation (GPSF) in the US, Ghanaian Pharmacy Association (GPha), and the US Ghana Chamber of Commerce among others. She was followed by Mrs. Ofori-Ampofo and Mr. Nyante, who gave updates about happenings in Ghana. Dr. Ayi followed with much needed information about SARS-CoV-2 and COVID-19, including its structure, presentation, age distribution, management, testing and rate of transmission. Next up was Dr. Byll, with the psychosocial impact of COVID-19 on nurses, individuals, and children. He provided information on coping mechanisms and valuable resources. He also stressed the importance of seeking information from reputable sources such as the CDC and health departments and to limit excessive exposure to negative news and unverified information on social media. The last speaker Ms. Adams was invaluable in providing an overview of the different regulating bodies at the federal, state and local levels as they related to access to information and resources such as PPE. She provided information on Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) and advised nurses to know their rights and benefits at their disposal. She also encouraged employees to dialogue with their employers and managers but use tact instead of anger and aggression to get what they need. She stressed the fact that managers in whole do want their employees to succeed and have access to the resources they need to thrive and be safe. The Question and Answer (Q&A) session was very educational and informative, with questions ranging from international travel to Ghana, pregnant nurses caring for COVID-19 patients, return to school and availability of EAPs in Ghana. Overall, the feedback from participants was very positive for the 2-hour conference, which ran over by 15 minutes because of questions. There were requests for a longer conference to allow for more time for panelists' content and Q&A session. NAGNF is looking forward to the next virtual conference in the very near future.

By Irene Ahorlu, MSN, CRNA

## ...Then There Was COVID

The masses went about their daily activities.

They walked, they danced, they sang and they ate. There were meetings to attend and people to meet.

There was a rumbling in the far distance, Oceans away ...

The masses took public transport. They settled comfortably in Uber rides. They went on trips and planned more trips. They went to the malls to shop or idle. The rumbling got closer; Oceans were being crossed ...

The masses went to the movies. They watched Netflix and "Chilled." They scrolled through channels and watched talking heads. Some were sounding alarm bells while others mocked. A faux pas! The rumbling was close to shore. The Oceans had become beaches.

The masses sneezed and coughed. They were feverish but it was just the Flu... or was it? The masses went to work, some stayed home. Schools were closed. Some lost consciousness while others had rumblings in their belly. No longer was the rumbling afar but ashore. The Oceans had been crossed.

The masses were now awake. Some lost their lives, minds, freedoms, health and livelihood. Others lost family, friends, and colleagues without saying goodbye. Some gained the meaning of Life and simplicity, while others gained spirituality, humanity, consciousness and the pursuit of happiness. There were heroes who saved lives and maintained it and there were villains who spread lies and savored it. Some of these villains were hoarders.

The rumbling from afar has a name: COVID-19. This rumbling will be defeated and humanity will forever be awakened and humbled. This rumbling will never be forgotten.

The Oceans have become one.

By Irene Ahorlu, MSN, CRNA

## NAGNF Member Recognition

Please meet our newly minted Doctor of Nursing Practice, Asri Byll. Dr. Asri Byll, DNP, RN, CMSRN is a freshman course coordinator at St. Francis Medical Center School of Nursing who facilitates students' learning and transition from nursing school into career nurses. After working as an informaticist, psychiatric, medical-surgical oncology nurse, senior educator, and adjunct instructor, Asri became interested in educating nursing students to help increase the growing nursing workforce. Dr. Byll understands the importance of using evidence-based practice and an advanced degree to help educate students and communicate the understanding of nursing concepts.

Dr. Byll also has experience in item writing and content review, which includes working with NCSBN to develop standardized sample questions that are used to prepare graduate students for the NCLEX exam. He also works with Lippincott as clinical editor and subject matter expert to review and update nursing competency and certification material, which are used by large organizations to assess nursing staff competencies.

Dr. Byll holds an MSN degree in nursing informatics and completed coursework for his DNP degree at Grand Canyon University on May 29, 2020.

In addition, Dr. Byll is an active member of NAGNF and serves as the Treasurer for the Northeast Chapter. He was recently a panelist on NAGNF's first virtual annual conference held on June 6th, 2020. He provided much needed information on the psychosocial impact of COVID-19, with strategies to cope through the current healthcare crisis. We wish Dr. Byll continued success in his professional career and are proud of his accomplishments.



# Reopening the Economy Would Add 233,000 Deaths by July but save Millions of Jobs

According to U.S News World Report(1), the Penn Wharton Budget Model, a new study, reveals the balance of reopening the economy to save jobs will in effect be detrimental to human life. The number of deaths of Americans from the coronavirus will approximately double by end of June in comparison to White House estimates circulated in recent weeks for total deaths over the course of entire outbreak. 1 million or more Americans, have been infected to date with the virus and experts predict the outbreak will continue in some capacity for the next several months.

The study further reveals that, even under the best-case scenario in terms of loss-of-life, which would mean states do not open at all until June 30, an estimated 117,000 people will die from coronavirus. In this same scenario, however, U.S. gross domestic product would end June down 11.6% over the year and roughly 18.6 million more jobs would be lost between May 1 and June 30. Since the onset of this pandemic in mid-march, nearly 30 million Americans have filed initial unemployment claims. This number likely undershoots the severity of the unemployment crisis, since many Americans cannot or will not file for government assistance, and many have reported facing difficulty in filing claims to backlogged state unemployment offices.

Under this restrictive scenario and most conservative estimates, nearly 1 in 3 Americans who were employed in February would have lost their jobs by the end of June if states do not start to reopen. Practicing social distancing, wearing masks when outside the home, utilizing sanitization practices and maintaining some restrictions like the prohibition of in-house dining at bars and restaurants, for example-approximately 4.4 million jobs would be saved.

In contrast to the above report, John Hopkins economist (2), Alessandro Rebucci at the Carey Business School, says in order to revive the economy, the coronavirus pandemic must be brought under control. He asserts that lifting social distancing requirements in order to reopen the economy is a false promise and an economic depression is inevitable, as well as the financial future of the country is unlikely to resemble the economy of the past. Therefore, in order for the U.S. economy to recover, the public needs an end to the pandemic. He adds: "Reopening an infected economy is no shortcut to financial recovery. Normalcy for businesses and customers is the need for safety."

According to Vox (3), eight states that experts worry about are the new Covid-19 hot spots, which have seen a spike because of their economic reopening. These states are:

1. **Arizona** Hospitalizations May 16: 791 || June 8: 1,252
2. **North Carolina** Hospitalizations May 22:568 || June 9: 774
3. **South Carolina** Relaxed/ended stay-at-home order: May 4 || Hospitalizations on June 9:541(up from 482 on June 7)
4. **Utah** Hospitalizations May 4:102 ||June 9: 126
5. **Arkansas** Hospitalizations May 4: 91 || June 8: 171
6. **Texas** Hospitalizations May 1: 1,778 || June 8: 1,935
7. **Florida** Relaxed/ended stay –at-home order: May 18 || Test positivity rate: 4.1(increased from 3.2 percent in two weeks)
8. **Tennessee** Relaxed social distancing policies : May 1  
Daily average of new hospitalizations as of May 20:18  
Daily average of new hospitalizations as of June 9:26  
Tennessee does not disclose its total current hospitalizations, but does report new hospitalizations each day and those have increased since late May.

By Evelyn Ntumy, BSN, CCM

## How to Protect Yourself & Others (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

- Know how it spreads
  - Wash your hands often
  - Cover your mouth and nose with a cloth face cover when around others
  - Cover coughs and sneezes
  - Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily
  - Monitor your health
  - Practice social distancing
  - Wear gloves when necessary  
Follow [CDC guidance](#) if symptoms develop.
1. [US News || Reopening the Economy](#)
  2. [Johns Hopkins Economist](#)
  3. [8 States Experts Worry About](#)
  4. [How to Protect Yourself & Others](#)

## Achievements of NAGNF

### Virtual Nightingale Challenge Workshop

The Virtual Nightingale Challenge workshop for 67 selected young Nurses and Midwives which was held via Zoom has successfully ended. The Nursing and Midwifery Council in partnership with the University of Ghana Medical Centre, Mental Health Authority, Teaching Hospitals, Ghana Health Service, Police Hospital, 37 Military Hospital, Ghana College of Nurses & Midwives and School of Nursing & Midwifery, University of Ghana, Legon organized the four-day sessional program in two weeks. Participants were involved in leadership and mentoring programs, covering cross-cutting topics and emerging issues of Nursing and Midwifery leadership. Speaking on behalf of the North American Ghana Nurses Foundation (NAGNF) from the USA, Mrs. Matilda Adams, Chapter President, NAGNF Northeast said she was confident that nurses and midwives in Ghana and abroad will lead the way in expanding and diversifying the healthcare system.



The Nursing and Midwifery Council of Ghana will be celebrating 50 years of regulatory excellence commencing June 2020 and climaxing it with a thanksgiving service in March 2021. In commemoration of the event, a “Pre-Anniversary Launch Webinar” was held on June 23rd and the 24th and our own Gifty Y. Lano (BSN, RNFA, CNOR) founding President and Chairperson of Board of Trustees, NAGNF, USA, was a guest speaker.

### COVID-19 Fundraiser

The Embassy of Ghana recently launched a fundraising campaign, in close collaboration with US-based Ghanaian Churches and Associations, to raise \$1 million to support the fight against COVID-19. In lieu of this, NAGNF donated \$3000 to the Ghana Embassy to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.



## The Ghana Physicians and Surgeons Foundation

The Ghana Physicians and Surgeons Foundation (GPSF) in May 2020, collaborated with the North America Ghana Nurses Foundation (NAGNF) to organize a public question and answer session on Zoom. We were honored to have our own Rita Oppong, NAGNF National Secretary, serve as one of the panelists and provide useful insight on the topic “Working in the era of COVID.”

**DR KWABENA OAPARE**  
FAMILY MEDICINE

**DR PEARL QUARTEY-KUMAPLEY**  
PREVENTATIVE MEDICINE

**DR BERTHA SERWA AFI**  
INFECTION SPECIALIST

**DR JENNIFER ADJU-FROMPONG**  
EMERGENCY MEDICINE

**DR JEMIMA KANKAM**  
PSYCHIATRIST

**DR AFUA NYANIH**  
OB/GYN

**DR MARY ARTHUR**  
MODERATOR

**RITA OPPONG, MSN, ONC**  
ICU NURSE AND EDUCATOR

**DR AKOSUA JOYCE OPPONG**  
FAMILY NURSE PRACTITIONER

**GPSF NORTH AMERICA IN COLLABORATION WITH NAGNF**  
**GENERAL PUBLIC Q&A**  
**WORKING IN THE ERA OF COVID**  
**SATURDAY, MAY 30, 2020, 7 - 8:30PM EST**  
**ZOOM ID# 443 135 9414**  
**PW: 907109**

**GPSF**

By Vivian Mafoh, MSN

## Black Lives Matter Tribute: How Can We Be the Change in Our Professional/Personal Lives?

We have often heard the words “Black Lives Matter.” Some of us wonder what it is all about. Some agree with the statement wholeheartedly, while others question the premise behind the phrase. Some may feel a little guilty for wanting to agree, because after all, don’t all lives matter? In order for all lives to matter, black lives have to matter first. It would be great if we lived in a world or country where this discussion was not necessary, a society where the color of one’s skin was not the basis of mistreatment and inequality, but we do not. Systemic racism and its ills frequently permeate our nation, our world even. We are constantly reminded overtly or covertly that black should be less than, that black is not good enough. This thinking is not only detrimental to our progress as a people, it also allows atrocities to occur with little repercussions. The recent deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and George Floyd, in succession, has led to an uprising and re-awakening of the Black Lives Matter Movement, because frankly black people are tired and fed up. Although 3 unarmed black people murdered by law enforcement is not something new, this time black folks have had enough.

Sadly, these are not isolated incidents. It happens frequently, and we only hear about the ones that are publicized. Prior to these recent murders, there were many others. We can go as far back as Emmett Till, a 14-year-old black boy lynched in 1955 for offending a white woman. More recently, there are others, including Kwasi Ashun, Amadou Diallo, Shawn Bell, Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner, Sandra Bland, Michael Brown, Laquan McDonald, Freddie Gray, Mya Hall, Alexia Christian, Tony McDade and many others. Hence the need for a movement. Actually the Black Lives Matter organization was founded in 2013 after the death of Trayvon Martin, and the acquittal of his murderer. It was started by 3 black women who wanted to create a movement to fight for freedom, healing and justice for all black people affected by systemic racism and injustice. Racism, inequality and affirming that black lives matter does not only relate to protests, shootings and murders. It also translates into our practice in healthcare, both at the bedside and all levels of care. Access to treatment, medication research and affordability is not the same for blacks as it may be for other races. Even currently, the coronavirus pandemic is affecting blacks at higher rates due to disparities already in place. These disparities can be due to a combination of factors, including but not limited to lack of access, disservice and apprehension to seek care.

There have been many incidents in American history targeting black people, that have led to the mistrust of the medical system, and the effects have been lasting. For example, the “Tuskegee Study of Untreated Syphilis in African American Men” was a research study started in 1932. It included 600 black men, and researchers purposely withheld the diagnosis and treatment of syphilis from 399 of the men, so they could study the long term effects of the disease. The men were never told they had the disease, and were instead told they were being treated for “bad blood.” They went on to develop horrible side effects and infect others. The study was supposed to be 6 months long, but lasted 40 years. There is also the story of Dr. J. Marion Sims, known as “the father of gynecology.” He was the inventor of the

speculum, fistula and gallbladder surgeries, and performed the first successful artificial insemination. He blatantly performed gynecological procedures on enslaved women without anesthesia, and a lot of his procedures were experimental, in the name of research. Another notable yet sad story is the one of 31-year-old Henrietta Lacks. She died from cervical cancer in 1951 at Johns Hopkins Medical Center in Baltimore, and before her death, a surgeon extracted samples of her tumor without her knowledge or consent. Likely because she was described as “poor, black and dying.” He cultured those cells which continued to grow, and they became “the first immortal human cells ever grown in a lab.” Her cells, also known as HeLa cells are considered one of the most important things to happen to medicine in the last century.” They have been used to study AIDS, Cancer, Parkinson’s disease, In vitro fertilization, Vaccines, Influenza and Hemophilia, to name a few. Her family was not notified until over 20 years later, and there was no compensation, despite the millions made off her cells.

As disturbing as these stories are, the past cannot be altered. Instead we can learn from them, and be the change moving forward. Before anything, it is important to do self-checks to determine our emotions about all that is going on. It can be overwhelming, especially when we realize that history does in fact repeat itself. We must take care of ourselves first, and allow ourselves the freedom to be okay with our thoughts and feelings. Finally, if we decide to help be the change, here are some ways to do so:

- Pray for guidance.
- Realize that we can stop history’s repetitive cycle. We all have a voice and can speak up against injustice, whether at work or in the community.
- We can join organizations such as NAGNF to allow us to be a collective voice for change.
- Support black elevation, whether in education, business or community.
- When possible, learn the history, so we can better understand. It can clarify why our patients and their families may have certain ideas about treatment. It is okay to ask for an explanation, respectfully, although we may not always have the time. An extra minute or two to understand what is causing your patient to be “non-compliant” can make all the difference in treatment outcomes.
- Realize that racism is not a “their” issue, it is an “all of us” issue. After all, we are all blessed with this beautiful melanin skin, and racists do not often ask for country of origin. Also, certain people/patients may have prejudices against us because of this beautiful skin. Just do your best as you follow the oath of “Do No Harm.” If you are at risk, leave the situation if you can. If you cannot, turn on your cell phone camera.
- Lastly, remember it took time to get here, and it will take time for change. We need lasting, impactful transformation, and the only way to get there is if we stay the course. As our Ghanaian national anthem rightly states, “Bold to defend forever, the cause of freedom and of right.”

We are NAGNF strong!

By Emma Dzifa Toussaint, FNP-C

## President's Corner

What a year 2020 is turning out to be, as we all work hard to keep our heads above water in this COVID-19 era. Watching the seemingly unrelenting rise of the pandemic and associated implications, we employ many strategies to navigate our way around and adapt to the rules and recommendations as they evolve around us. One can only describe it as overwhelming and sometimes exhausting. Yet as front line workers and warriors, we strive on and proceed in a manner ensuring safety to our friends, family and patients alike. Although many of us have lost dear ones to COVID-19, we continue to offer support to our patients with extraordinary resilience and poise. As professional nurses wearing many caps, that is just what we do. Just like in other pandemic eras before COVID-19, we continue to encourage and support our patients in ways that only nurses can.

A demonstration of our resilience is shown in our recent collective donation to the Ghana embassy during the COVID-19 fund raising initiative. Although many of us were affected by furloughs due to the pandemic, we searched deep into our finances, raised funds and collectively donated generously to mitigate the extreme economic hardship in our beloved country. Our awareness of the global impact and our commitment to be part of the mitigating solutions is evident in this action. For this I stand and say a huge thank you to each and every one of the donors.

We also made significant progress on our strategic plans. First is the commencement of the New England chapter a few months ago, a collaborative conference with the Ghana Physicians and Surgeons Foundation (GPSF) and a successful online conference hosted by the North East (NE) chapter in New Jersey. The NE conference brought together a partnership of speakers from the GPSF, The Nursing and Midwifery Council of Ghana (NMC) and the Ghana Nurses and Midwives Association (GNMA). I also had the privilege of representing NAGNF in a pre-anniversary celebration webinar organized by the NMC on a Zoom conference this June. This brought together important healthcare stake holders across the Ghana healthcare industry and provided significant recognition for NAGNF. Our successful participation in all the conferences afford us great opportunities and the ability to develop collaborative relationships that we continue to explore, edging us closer to our goals.

Our South Western (SW) chapter is working hard to host our annual conference in an appropriate online platform with announcement of details soon. It is an exciting and welcoming opportunity to collectively discuss processes as we continue to move forward with our organizational strategic plans and goals, and I look forward to us meeting again soon.

I pray God's grace and continued guidance be with us as we navigate this difficult era. God bless and keep safe.

Gifty Lano, RN, BSN, RNFA, CNOR  
*NAGNF President*



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