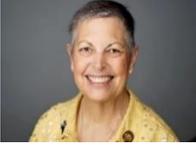


Nurses EXPO 2026 “Empowering Our Future” Speaker Information and Schedule – Friday, April 24, 2026, 7:00 AM to 5:00 PM – BMO Center, Rockford, Illinois

Type	Time	Presentation Title/Learning Outcome/Objectives	Speaker/Credentials/Short bio
KEYNOTE 1	8:00-9:15 am	<p>The Effects of Positive Psychology on Healing</p> <p><u>Learning Outcome:</u> Increase understanding of Positive Psychology on Mindful practices</p> <p><u>Objectives:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe three key components of positive psychology. • Explain the physiological effect of positive psychology. • Demonstrate an example of a mindfulness exercise. 	 <p>Kim Kraft, MSN, RN, CPAN(r) CAPA(r)</p> <p>Short bio: Kim Kraft has been a nurse for nearly 50 years. Her extensive background includes experience as an Advanced Perianesthesia Nurse Clinician, Assistant Professor of Nursing Education and Clinical Coordinator. She is a respected member and former president of the American Society of Perianesthesia Nurses (ASPN). Drawing on her professional expertise and personal experience navigating a challenging illness, Kim offers a valuable perspective on the intersection of psychology and healing as a cancer survivor.</p>
Presentation	9:15-9:45 am	<p>NUCCA: Finding Answers and Relief for Chronic Conditions</p> <p><u>Learning Outcome:</u> Increase understanding of NUCCA Chiropractic Therapy and its impact on human physiology</p> <p><u>Objectives:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe Upper Cervical anatomy and biomechanics of misalignment • Verbalize resulting health implications of the upper cervical misalignment • List symptoms of individuals who are ideal candidates for NUCCA 	 <p>Dr. Hannah Orem, Board Certified NUCCA Chiropractor</p> <p>Short bio: Dr. Orem graduated Summa Cum Laude as valedictorian from Palmer College of Chiropractic in Davenport, IA and is one of less than 50 doctors worldwide who is Board Certified in the National Upper Cervical Chiropractic Association (NUCCA). Dr. Orem holds a bachelor degree in Biology from the University of Northwestern – St. Paul. She is a Rockford native, graduating as valedictorian from Rockford Christian High School. Dr. Orem has a commitment to quality, individualized care as well as a passion for education. She is a member of the NUCCA Education Committee and an instructor of chiropractic doctors and students.</p>

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Type	Time	Presentation Title/Learning Outcome/Objectives	Speaker/Credentials/Short bio
Morning Breakout 1	10:15-11:30 am	<p>I use the pronouns she, her, hers: care considerations for those who are gender diverse</p> <p><u>Learning Outcome:</u> Increase understanding and skills of caring for the gender diverse population</p> <p><u>Objectives:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The learner will demonstrate correct use of terminology as it relates to gender diverse persons • The learner will develop a comprehensive care plan including the risks and implications of hormone therapies, psychosocial and medical needs for gender diverse patients • The learner will identify and deliver culturally competent care to the gender diverse population with specific attention to the 2025 ANA Code of Ethics for Nurses 	 <p>Anne Havrilla, MSN, CRNA, APRN</p> <p>Short bio: Anne Havrilla, MSN, CRNA, APRN is a pediatric nurse anesthetist with 13 years of experience at Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children’s Hospital of Chicago, where she has spent the past six years in the cardiac division of pediatric anesthesia. She is an active member of the AANA and has delivered numerous hospital-based education sessions, including cardiac anesthesia teaching, gender-diverse care, vascular-access with ultrasound and airway management simulation. Anne presented on gender-diverse care at the 2024 AANA Annual Congress and is a co-author of <i>Perioperative Guidelines for Transgender and Gender Diverse Patients</i>.</p>
Morning Breakout 2	10:15-11:30 am	<p>The Intersection of Pain and Substance Use Disorders</p> <p><u>Learning Outcome:</u> Improve knowledge and understanding of caring for individuals who suffer from substance use disorders</p> <p><u>Objectives:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe assessment approaches for pain and SUD • Discuss the bidirectional effect of pain & SUD • List analgesic approaches with risk mitigation strategies for patients in pain w/ SUD risk 	 <p>June Oliver, MSN, APRN/CNS, CCNS, PGMT-BC, AP-PMN</p> <p>Short bio: June Oliver is an Advance Practice Nurse with 25 years of experience in Pain Management, in both inpatient and outpatient settings- with experience in adult critical care prior to that. She earned her BSN from Univ of Illinois and MSN from Rush University in Chicago and enjoys teaching as adjunct professor for Univ of Illinois. She is currently serving as President for ASPMN and has contributed to multiple publications and position statements within and outside of ASPMN. She has a passion to teach and practice safe and effective pain management for all healthcare providers to benefit all patients in need.</p>

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Type	Time	Presentation Title/Learning Outcome/Objectives	Speaker/Credentials/Short bio
Morning Breakout 3	10:15-11:30 am	<p>On Being a Death Doula</p> <p><u>Learning Outcome:</u> Increase appreciation of the responsibilities and rewards of being an end-of-life doula</p> <p><u>Objectives:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The learner will be able to describe the role of a death doula and differentiate it from the roles of hospice nurses, palliative care teams, and other end-of-life care providers • The learner will be able to identify at least three practical ways nurses can collaborate with death doulas to support patients and families experiencing serious illness, active dying, or grief • The learner will be able to apply at least two patient-centered communication or comfort-support techniques used by death doulas to enhance emotional, spiritual, and psychosocial care at the bedside 	 <p>Kimberly Rich, Doctoral Degree, Certified Grief Educator, and Death Doula</p> <p>Short bio: Dr. Kimberly Rich is the owner of Tomorrow Mourning and serves as a grief educator, death doula, and end of life companion. Kim's journey with grief started following the sudden loss of her mother in 2021. It was then that she first recognized the power of relationship in grief, and the ways that we can fail to support one another as end of life approaches. Kim is a best selling author and keynote speaker and encourages all participants to reach out to her if she can support them in any way.</p>
First Afternoon Breakout 1	12:30-1:45 pm	<p>I use the pronouns she, her, hers: care considerations for those who are gender diverse</p> <p>(See morning breakout session 1 above)</p>	<p>(See morning breakout session 1 above)</p> <p>Anne Havrilla, MSN, CRNA, APRN</p>

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Type	Time	Presentation Title/Learning Outcome/Objectives	Speaker/Credentials/Short bio
First Afternoon Breakout 2	12:30-1:45 pm	<p>Communicating Effectively While Responding to Dementia-related Behaviors</p> <p><u>Learning Outcome:</u> Increase understanding of how dementia impacts communication and understanding and begin utilizing communication strategies</p> <p><u>Objectives:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss how dementia affects communications and behaviors • Relate strategies for communication and dementia-related behaviors • Compare medical and non-medical means to address needs of those with dementia 	 <p>Aileen Zei, BA, Human Services</p> <p>Short bio: Aileen Zei, Program Manager for the Alzheimer’s Association, strives to spread awareness and educate the community by providing valuable information and resources regarding Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias. Aileen holds a Bachelor’s degree in Human Services which has provided her the opportunity to work in non-profit and for-profit environments, serving older adults. Aileen feels that one of life’s greatest gifts is working with dedicated and compassionate staff and volunteers.</p>

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Type	Time	Presentation Title/Learning Outcome/Objectives	Speaker/Credentials/Short bio
First Afternoon Breakout 3	12:30-1:45 pm	<p>Understanding Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD): Tools for Compassionate Nursing Care</p> <p><u>Learning Outcome:</u> Identify ASD presentation symptoms and referral pathways to ensure continuity of care</p> <p><u>Objectives:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbalize how individual differences in communication, sensory processing, and behavior among patients with ASD may affect clinical interactions and care delivery. • Discuss techniques that promote effective communication techniques and behavioral support measures when interacting with patients with ASD to reduce anxiety and behavioral escalation, and to promote treatment compliance. • List at least three appropriate referral pathways to ensure continuity of care and long-term support. 	 <p>Nika Winiarski, PhD</p> <p>Short bio: Dr. Nika Winiarski is a Licensed Clinical Psychologist who provides diagnostic assessment and evidence-based intervention for children, adolescents, and adults. She was trained in Clinical Psychology at Emory University, and has experience in multiple treatment settings, including hospitals and college counseling.</p>
Second Afternoon Breakout 1	1:55-3:10 pm	<p>Sepsis/SIRS</p> <p><u>Learning Outcome:</u> Increase understanding and future trends in diagnosis and treatment of Sepsis/SIRS</p> <p><u>Objectives:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss/review epidemiology/pathophysiology of sepsis • Discuss/review treatment of sepsis • Discuss emerging trends and treatment to diagnose and manage sepsis 	 <p>Dr. Aaron Taylor, DO/Physician-Emergency Medicine</p> <p>Short bio: Dr. Aaron Taylor is an Emergency Medicine physician and clinical operations leader at Mercyhealth, focusing on data-driven quality improvement in sepsis, stroke systems, ED throughput, and antimicrobial stewardship. His work integrates operational modeling, real-time analytics, and cross-disciplinary collaboration to improve patient outcomes and system performance across multiple emergency departments. He frequently leads initiatives that translate frontline clinical challenges into measurable, scalable process improvements. Dr. Taylor’s current interests include predictive modeling for acute care, early-detection strategies for sepsis, and the design of high-reliability ED workflow systems.</p>

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Second Afternoon Breakout 2	1:55-3:10 pm	<p>Communicating Effectively While Responding to Dementia-related Behaviors</p> <p>(See first afternoon breakout session 2 above)</p>	<p>(See first afternoon breakout session 2 above)</p> <p>Aileen Zei, BA, Human Services</p>
Second Afternoon Breakout 3	1:55-3:10 pm	<p>Nursing Beyond Borders: Mission Nursing</p> <p><u>Learning Outcome:</u> Increase the understanding of the extent of healthcare crises throughout the world and the impact of volunteerism</p> <p><u>Objectives:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners will verbalize the healthcare crises in underserved regions of the world • Learners will state the role of NGO’s in Community Health Education • Learners will relate what impact individuals can make in volunteering to serve 	 <p>Sharon Thomas, RN, TNS</p> <p>Short bio: A 1983 graduate of Saint Anthony School of Nursing, Sharon has worked at OSF and UW Health for 42 years and has also worked with EMR development as a nurse liaison. Sharon took her first medical mission trip to Kenya, Africa at the age of 49 and has since served as team leader on 34 additional trips, traveling to Indonesia, Madagascar, Uganda, Tanzania, Haiti and Belize multiple times. Today she serves as Executive Director for Lutherans in Medical Missions and keeps busy with grant writing and reviews grant requests from mission agencies across the world.</p>
KEYNOTE 2	3:30–4:45 pm	<p>The Song of Care: Listening, Healing, and Being Human Together</p> <p><u>Learning Outcome:</u> Increase understanding of Music Therapy and its impact on emotional and physiological systems</p> <p><u>Objectives:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define music therapy and describe the qualifications/clinical scope of MT-BCs • Identify key principles of music therapy that align with nursing values • Apply insights, including the physiological and emotional effects of music-based interventions, to enhance their own caregiving practice 	 <p>Kearsti-Rae Knowles, MMT, LPMT, MT-BC</p> <p>Short bio: Kearsti-Rae (K-Rae) is the owner of Safe in Sound Music Therapy, LLC. She serves a wide spectrum of populations including older adults (Dementia/Alzheimer’s, Parkinson’s, general), hospice, children with emotional and behavioral disorders, individuals with Autism, individuals with developmental disabilities, children with Down Syndrome, individuals with assorted mental health diagnoses, and children with vision and hearing loss. Her mission is to musically walk with people of all ages and abilities on their journey to feel comfort, experience growth, and build connections.</p>