



**NCSBN**  
Leading Regulatory Excellence

***Past Event: 2024 NCSBN Annual Meeting - CEO's Address Video Transcript***  
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**Event**

2024 NCSBN Annual Meeting

More info: <https://www.ncsbn.org/past-event/2024-ncsbn-annual-meeting>

**Presenter**

Phil Dickison, PhD, RN, CEO, NCSBN

- [Dr. Dickison] I want to take this opportunity, one, to welcome you once again. I'm truly honored when I think about standing in this room with you, a group of nursing experts, regulatory experts. I did tell everybody back there I'm moving around, right, so, sorry, it's the way it works.

This is my first time as CEO to address this group in its totality. I want to take this moment and the next few minutes to impress upon you about how important this very moment is. Here we are, one NCSBN, focused on one mission, public protection.

Where's my slides? They're there?

- [Woman] Right, sorry.

- That's okay. I didn't move them forward. If every moment matters, and you've heard that a lot, if in fact it does, logic dictates that this moment, at this time, in this room, on this date, matters to every one of us. And as our theme suggests, it can have lasting impact. Over the last 10 months, I have talked to many people, and I've said these words to a few of them.

We, this was staff members and some of you. We stand on the shoulders of giants, nurse leaders, early nurse leaders, early founders of NCSBN. Elaine Ellibee, "Trudy" Malone, Mildred Schmidt, "Pat" Keefe, Joyce Schowalter, Sharon Weisenback.

These individuals, I think, encapsulated an understanding of the moment, most in a statement by "Trudy" Malone.

And she said, "I have a continuing, pulsating belief." I love that. "A pulsating belief in the protection of the public as it relates to nursing." That is the sole purpose for the existence of a board of nursing. May we have created this council truly for that purpose.

These were nurse leaders who were not afraid to look at that moment, to grasp it, and say, "I can see how nursing, the nursing world is today, and I have a vision of how it should be."

And they weren't afraid to grab that moment. They demonstrated great care, great wisdom, and great risk to deliver to us in this room a legacy. And we applaud them for that today.

But now we have a responsibility. Given to us was that legacy. It was handed to us. And our responsibilities, we now own that care. We own that wisdom to take that legacy, to build upon it, and to pass it off to that next generation of leaders who will stand on our shoulders someday in the future.

That brings me to a concept of dueling paradigms. Paradigms. Paradigms, if you think about it generally, are something that you could call a mental map or I like to refer to them as lenses of the mind. Lenses that contain the assumptions and rules by which we judge the world and the people around us.

More specifically for us, it is the lens of public protection. If you will, public protection eyeglasses. And those guide how each of us interact with each other within the regulatory space, within this organization, but most importantly within the moments of nursing.

I remember when I was four years old, four, four, four years old, no, fourth grade, sorry, fourth grade, not four years old, I was a little young then, fourth grade. And my teacher called my mother and said I couldn't see. She said the guy, they literally, "Phil can't see, he needs help, probably needs glasses." I personally thought that was crazy.

I thought I saw just fine until I went to that optometrist and I remember this day and I will remember it the rest of my life. I go in the optometrist's office, they've got new glasses for me, but he tells me, "Look across the room at this picture on the wall," and I do. It seems fine to me.

I can see the street. I can see the house. I see the trees. I see the sky. It seems normal to me. And then he hands me these glasses he's made for me. He says, "Put these on."

And I put them on. And then he says, "Look at the picture again." It was amazing. I had never seen such clarity, such color, such lines of demarcation. Never seen it. It was spectacular. I liken it to if you have ever seen the "Wizard of Oz."

You know that moment. All of you know that moment. Dorothy lands and it's all black and white. She opens the door. What does she see? Just a splash of color and beauty. That is how it felt to me.

What I know is that everybody in this room has a lens, more than one. You have a lot of lenses in your head. What I believe, and I'm willing to discuss any of this, but what I believe is you can actually break all of the lenses you have in your mind down into two very simple categories.

A lens for reality and a lens for the way you think things should be. It's just simply two things. I call it dueling paradigms. Let's look at a few pictures maybe to make it clearer to you. Take a look at this picture very quickly.

Everybody in this room saw something. You either saw an ink blot. Some of you, hope you're not sociopaths, didn't see something else. You might have saw a face. You might have saw a musician. If you look long enough, you saw both. The point is each of you saw something and it was not the same because of the immediate lens that it went off on.

Same thing. Some of you see a face. Some of you see a word. By the way, how many see a word? Yeah. Liar. Your eyes are lying to you.

There is no face here. There's only a word. Right? Two lenses. Love this one because this is about how we get into things that we think about. If you take a look at this and you look at the center dots on my right and left, which one's bigger? You want to know what?

Get a ruler and come up here. They're the same size. It is the things around the lens that cause you to think that one is bigger or not. They are, in fact, measurably the same size. And my favorite of all. What do you see here?

How many people see a triangle? What if I told you there is absolutely no triangle there? Does not exist, folks. You drew the lines in. Look again once I tell you. Your lens said there was a line there when there was not. You see what I'm talking about in dueling paradigms.

It's very important. And so our question today becomes, are lenses correct? Are the lenses of public protection that we're using this day, in this hour, and for the future, are they correct? And we need to be able to ask that question because if they are not correct, then that legacy, then we will not be able to experience the beauty and the satisfaction of the work that we're doing right now because we won't be able to complete it.

We will tarnish the legacy of those giants before us and we will hinder the success of those leaders who come after us. And so I would posit to you that our lens of public protection is One NCSBN. And its mission is defined by a concept that leads us to our products.

And I say that that concept of One NCSBN is one mission. And when I say One NCSBN, I don't mean just the board of directors. Sorry, Jay, I don't.

I don't mean just the staff. When I say One NCSBN, it's everybody in this room. It means every board president and executive officer to board staff, to board members, to our board of directors, and to every staff member at this Chicago office here at NCSBN. We are One NCSBN.

And it is our mission of public protection and our vision of regulatory excellence underpinned by this culture or the values I should say first. What are the values? The values are transparency, collaboration, innovation, integrity, and excellence. Could you say all of those without reading them?

We should. They should be written on our hearts actually. They're mine. Why are they important? They are important because I believe that at times we've forgotten them. I believe at times we've been sloppy with them, and to our shame, at times perhaps we've even ignored them. They are that critical that we should never let that happen.

They are so critical to every moment of NCSBN and One NCSBN. But, they have to be underpinned as well with a unified culture, a culture that runs from respect to communication, collaboration, and trust. With those, it will lead to efficiency, empowerment, professionalism, accountability.

A culture that starts with thinking and listening before acting. A culture that seeks to understand before trying to be understood. A culture that does not selfishly demand that it gets what it wants.

But a culture that has a north star that demands the best of public protection as it relates to nursing. That is the culture we should strive for, and that culture is One NCSBN. But while we have all kinds of products and I appreciate this work that all the staff do, please, these products help all of us, these programs help all of us.

But it is not these products or programs that define us, it is our people that define us. And when I say our people, it is One NCSBN, everybody in this room, we are One NCSBN. And we exist for the moments of nursing. So why we exist, and the importance of these moments will never change.

Why? Because this right here is the reason we do what we do. It's the reason every one of you get up every morning and go to work for that moment of nursing that we'll experience in that day. But the one thing we know is while the moment of nursing will be forever, it's not going to change, Jay said it, the impact.

Everything else around it is going to change. The impact of the pandemic should have told us that. Everything around the moment of nursing can change, but the moment of nursing will stay the same. And that means what I am challenging you from this day forward, why I'm here today to challenge you is that we have to start asking some tough questions about how we regulate today.

And what are these? By definition alone, regulation is a barrier to practice. I'm not asking you to like it. I'm just telling you by definition alone, that is what it is. But here's the point.

Also by definition, it is a guardrail to public protection. What do we got here? Dueling paradigms. So that's why he put it up there. It is our dueling paradigms that we have to wrestle with, and we need to ask some questions today. And as I show you this next video, I want you to think about this question.

Do we have guardrails today that have simply become barriers? They're no longer guardrails of public prot-... We've just become to depend on them because they've been there for 20 years. They've been there for 10 years. We don't question those. Do we have those?

What should we actually stop doing today that we've been doing? What should we start that we haven't started? What should we improve on that we have started but haven't done the best at that's institutionalized? I'm asking you where we have done that. And can we change it without hurting public protection? In fact, the goal is what?

Improve public protection. Remove those things that are barriers and move toward a focus on the moment of guardrails in public protection. So I close with this. Benjamin Franklin was asked many times as George Washington was becoming president, starting the new nation of the United States, he was asked this question about the sun that was setting on George Washington's chair.

He was asked many times, is that a setting or a rising sun? And he said after the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution that he would happily say he knew now that this was in fact a rising sun. And so I challenge your lens today.

Dueling paradigms. What do you see? Is it a rising sun or a setting sun? I ask you to simply join me in believing this is a sun that's still rising. And that we, as we tackle and focus on the moments of nursing and that we stay in that space, we will rise to new heights.

We will do greater things. And yes, we will be in the moment. Thank you.