

Healthcare Recognition Dates - Unpacking the Mystery of their Origins

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As you may have noticed, I have been on a hiatus from posting for several months. Well, maybe you didn't notice since it is hard to prove a negative—the email you didn't receive. I try not to post unless I have something to offer, so here goes.

A few years ago, I started posting a few healthcare recognition dates with the idea that it would be helpful to HR professionals. The list grew as suggestions kept coming in on dates not included. Additionally, some marketing people suggested it would be helpful to include the recognition of disease/medical conditions as they were using our list.

Somehow, the list has grown to become one of the most comprehensive lists available. It is by far our most popular post!

There are always questions and comments about why a certain occupation is not included. We also have had requests to include the government or professional organization which created or approved the designation.

I thought it might be helpful to outline where these dates come from, what some of the designations such as “national” and “world” mean, and how HR Banana obtains and verifies them.

Who creates healthcare recognition dates?

The short answer is anyone can create a healthcare recognition date. There is no central or government authority that approves these dates. As one recent commenter said, it really is the wild west out there when it comes to these dates.

Healthcare recognition dates come from a variety of sources, including:

- **Professional organizations.** Many professional organizations establish recognition dates to honor their members and raise awareness of their profession. For example, the American Nurses Association (ANA) established National Nurses Day in 1953 to honor the contribution of nurses.
- **Government agencies.** Some government agencies also establish recognition dates for healthcare professionals and organizations. For example, the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) established National Public Health Week in 1976 to raise awareness of public health.
- **Congressional proclamation or resolution.** Sometimes, congressional representatives introduce a proclamation or resolution creating a healthcare recognition date. For example, in 2008, Senator Barbara Mikulski introduced a resolution that designated February 25 as National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day.

Those are the primary sources of the widely accepted recognition dates. There is nothing stopping a healthcare institution from creating their own. Of course, those would only be celebrated on the local level.

There is no central authority –government or not–that approves these dates. They can be created by anyone. The most common source for healthcare recognition dates is probably professional organizations. By far, they are responsible for the majority of these dates.

When government agencies introduce a recognition date, they are often focusing on their specific area of interest and responsibility. In other words, they are operating as the professional organizations do.

More on congressional proclamation or resolution

While some dates have been created by congressional proclamation or resolution, I think most congressional proclamations are the result of an individual or professional organization requesting it to promote a date that they have already created. I think the point of congressional action is more directed at getting the

date publicized and widely accepted.

Anyone can ask their congressional representative to introduce a proclamation or resolution regarding recognition dates. Did you know that congressional proclamation or resolution recognize the following:

- National Talk Like a Pirate Day (September 19)
- National Tell a Lie Day (April 1)
- National Hug Your Cat Day (June 21)
- National Take a Nap Day (June 21)
- National Eat What You Want Day (April 7)

Summary - anyone can create a recognition date. The challenge is getting it accepted. The best route is to suggest it to the appropriate professional organization. And believe me, as someone who checks these dates out, there is an organization for most occupations.

What does “national” or “world” mean in healthcare recognition dates?

Confession time! When I started compiling this list, I knew that professional organizations created many recognition dates. But, I assumed that the use of “national” such as in National Hospital Week required some government action or proclamation.

Not true! There is no restriction on the use of “national” and it does not mean that the government action or approval is required or provided. Our earlier example was that the ANA created *National Nurses Day* in 1953.

Anyone can use the word “national” in their recognition date. It is up to the originator. I would assume that the word would be used by any organization that wanted nationwide recognition of the date. Now what I can’t figure out is why anyone wouldn’t use it!

The same holds true for the use of the word “world”. It does not mean that the UN or some global agency has created or approved the date. It only means that the organization creating the date believes that it may be of global interest or

concern. (World AIDS Day, World Cancer Day, World Tuberculosis Day).

When Elon Musk gets us on Mars, we will have to start using Universe Cancer Day, Cosmos Health Day!

How does HR Banana compile/verify its list?

The list has become somewhat self-sustaining as to what occupations/events are included. It is the “when” that requires updating each year.

HR Banana starts verifying the recognition dates in July of each year. We look up each and every listing.

We search for that listing for the following year and see if a date has been created/publicized by a legitimate source. We do not use other calendars or guides such as ours as they sometimes contain inaccuracies.

Some observations are easy as they are always on the same date or the same period each year. For example, National Nurses Day is always on May 6 and starts National Nurses Week that ends on May 12. Regardless of which day of the week those dates fall on, those are the dates every year.

Many recognitions are similar and are easier to verify. Other recognition events may occur during a specific week of the month or day of the week but the dates change each year. We confirm the appropriate date for the coming year.

For all others, we try to confirm the recognition event with an appropriate professional organization. Do we always get to the creating or primary organization? I have no way of knowing, but usually the veracity is apparent.

For example, I will accept the American Medical Billing Association as a source for March 30, 2023 as Medical Billers Day. We try to do the same for all recognition dates.

There are now so many recognition dates/events and often overlapping titles. Sometimes it is a judgement call as to which occupation to include and whether or not a recognition for a similar but not exact title is acceptable.

If it is on the list, it is either there because a very reliable single source listed it, or because it was on multiple sites when I was not sure if I had reached the primary source.

How do you use the list?

First of all, verify any date before using it to create a celebration or recognition. Occasionally we get it wrong. In one instance, the dates had been changed after our list was created. The list is meant to assist you in planning. As Ronald Reagan said, "trust but verify".

If you are in a hospital or large organization, there is no way that you can observe all of these dates organization-wide. You will be celebrating every day and someone will be missed.

Our practice was to tell staff that we would celebrate all employees during hospital week. This is probably the most common approach of hospitals.

There could still be observances of specific professions/occupations on the department level. This is where the list came in handy as we encouraged department directors to make appropriate celebrations.

Clinics and specialty services can select whatever is appropriate for their area.

It really is the wild, wild west. Anyone can create a recognition date so if yours is missing, have at it!