A Vision for Future Health Care: Where Nurses Lead The Change

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With the release of the Institute of Medicine (IOM) and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation landmark report, “The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health,” this past October, nurses are featured and acknowledged by the IOM as the leaders and agents who will transform the health care system, ensuring care is patient centered, effective, safe, and affordable. This vision calls upon the entire nursing community to embrace this report as a blueprint for action, and requires each and every nurse to use evidence-based research and collaboration to improve health care. It also means working for and within a remodeled health care system that guarantees high-quality, patient-centered care.

As the largest segment of the health care workforce, nurses need to be full partners with other health professions to achieve significant improvements at the local, state, and national levels in both the delivery and health policy arenas. As a professional partner, nurse leaders understand and have demonstrated expertise and experience with innovative models of care, as well as the financial, technical, and political savvy to close clinical and financial holes within a health care delivery system. The IOM report repeatedly recognizes nurses have the proven solutions; but they cannot do it alone.

The Challenge

We are pleased and accept the challenge made in the IOM report and its recommendations. We at Nursing Economic$ have already made some tactical decisions on how we will coalesce around the eight evidence-based recommendations directed toward policymakers; national, state, and local government leaders; payers; and health care researchers, executives, and health care professionals. First, we congratulate Peter I. Buerhaus, PhD, RN, FAAN, editorial board member and column editor of “Economic$ of Health Care and Nursing,” on his recent appointment as chair of the National Health Care Workforce Commission. The commission’s mission is to develop and evaluate the education and training activities to determine whether the demand for health care workers is being met. This work is one of the four key messages identified in the IOM report. We wish Peter well as he leaves the journal’s editorial board and spearheads the work of the commission.

Second, Nursing Economic$ will work in partnership with other nursing journals to ensure the IOM’s effort of advancing improvements of America’s complex health system and nursing’s role is fully shared and disseminated to our readers as it relates to nurses’ education and training, formation of partnerships with physicians and other health care professionals, and effective workforce planning and policy.

Third, look for upcoming special issues over the next 2 years to cover such import and timely topics as evidence-based staffing, informatics, and end-of-life care and costs.

The Work

For those who may not yet be familiar with the IOM report that resulted in the culmination of a rigorous 2-year initiative, it outlines four messages and eight evidence-based recommendations directed toward policymakers, national, state and local government leaders, payers, and health care researchers, executives, and other health care professionals.

Four Messages

- Key message: Nurses should practice to the full extent of their education and training.
- Key message: Nurses should achieve higher levels of education and training through an improved education system that promotes seamless academic progression.
- Key message: Nurses should be full partners, with physicians and other health care professionals, in redesigning health care in the United States.
- Key message: Effective workforce planning and policymaking require better data collection and an improved information infrastructure.

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Eight Recommendations

- Remove scope-of-practice barriers.
- Expand opportunities for nurses to lead and diffuse collaborative improvement efforts.
- Implement nurse residency programs.
- Increase the proportion of nurses with baccalaureate degrees to 80% by 2020.
- Double the number of nurses with a doctorate by 2020.
- Ensure nurses engage in lifelong learning.
- Prepare and enable nurses to lead change to advance health.
- Build an infrastructure for the collection and analysis of interprofessional health care workforce data.

Nurses play an essential role in supporting and realizing the vision for health care in the United States. *Nursing Economic* recognizes that role and stands ready to ensure the nursing profession receives the necessary knowledge, data, and evidence needed to transform practice, education, and leadership through timely research and evidence-based manuscripts. We invite you to contribute and lead this transformation.

**NOTE:** For further information about the Institute of Medicine (IOM) and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation report, “The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health,” please visit:

- Webcast: http://www.visualwebcaster.com/event.asp?id=72689