The Future of Nursing Initiative

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National Nurses Week is quickly approaching; this year it runs from May 6–12. As I join ARN in celebrating our profession, I am happy to participate in the American Nurses Association (ANA) Organizational Affiliate's shared editorial for National Nurses Week. We hope that our shared joint message will help galvanize the troops (so to speak).

I know this won't surprise you, but we truly are at a turning point for healthcare delivery in this country. A number of factors have converged to spotlight the importance of maximizing nurses' contributions to quality, patient-centered care. The enactment of the Affordable Care Act (March 2010), followed by release of the Institute of Medicine's report on the future of nursing (October 2010), underscore nurses' unique contributions and untapped capacity to transform the quality of care.

The Affordable Care Act calls for a larger role for nurses in healthcare delivery. It provides for major investments in improving the quality of care and nursing workforce and education and emphasizes new models of care that feature nurses in prominent roles.

The Institute of Medicine (IOM) released its report, "The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health," in October 2010 after 2 years of study. The initiative was sponsored by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and led by a committee of nationally renowned experts from nursing, medicine, and other disciplines who reviewed the body of scientific evidence and concluded that nurses must take a greater leadership role in the delivery and development of care. The ultimate goal of the Initiative on the Future of Nursing is to improving how health care is delivered to better meet the needs of all patients. The report's recommendations include the following:

- Nurses should practice to the full extent of their education, training, and licensure, which requires the removal of scope of practice barriers.

- Nurses should achieve higher levels of education and training through an improved education system that promotes seamless academic progression, including nurse residency programs and lifelong learning.

- Nurses should be full partners, with physicians and other health professionals, in redesigning health care in the United States.
Effective healthcare workforce planning and policy making require better data collection and an improved information infrastructure, particularly as it relates to nursing's contribution to care.

In addition to the report and its full recommendations, you can also find a growing list of current activities going on in the nursing community that are congruent with these recommendations here.

So what does that mean for rehabilitation nursing? Here are a few points to ponder.

**What we do today will influence what our healthcare system looks like in 10 years.** The public values and trusts nurses. For the 11th year, nurses were voted the most trusted profession in America in Gallup's annual survey ranking professions for their honesty and ethical standards. Eighty-one percent of Americans believe that nurses' honesty and ethical standards are either "high" or "very high." The public's high regard for our profession, coupled with nurses' education and skills, makes us well positioned to take a major role in the transformation of the nation's healthcare system. Policymakers are calling on nursing to shape the future of health care. If our profession doesn't answer the call, others will.

**Nurses are the key to quality care in a transformed healthcare system.** Healthcare experts and patients alike are calling on our profession to optimize its contributions to better meet the needs of all patients for quality health care. Patients would benefit if all nurses practiced to the full extent of their skills and education. So I challenge you to think about where you want to be in your practice in 5 years; set career goals and identify what you will need to do to get there. Commit yourself to a lifelong learning process. Pursue advanced education through continued education, certification, and academic education.

**Nurses' knowledge and expertise are in demand.** Your experience and expertise are needed to help design and implement improved care environments and new ways to provide patient-centered care at your facility, organization, or in your own work. No one knows what patients want and need better than nurses. It's time for each of us to step up and meet the challenge. This is a once in a lifetime chance for every nurse to seize the opportunity and "become the change you want to see."

**Every nurse, from the bedside to the boardroom, has a role in transforming nursing.** The environment is ripe for nurses to get engaged in charting our future and the future of our nation's health care.

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So get involved, starting in your practice setting. Don't let policy happen to you—get involved in the policy committees at work. And when the opportunity presents itself, participate in workforce planning surveys and data collection opportunities. Data collection is an imperative part of reforming the current healthcare system. As nurses, we must measure the value of what we do. Nurses are counted upon, but if we don't count what nurses do, nurses don't count.

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**What's Ahead?**

A campaign to implement the "Future of Nursing" report is underway, following a kick-off meeting held in late 2010 that was attended by more than 600 health leaders from nursing, government, business, public health, academia, and other sectors. Five states (California, New Jersey, New York, Michigan, and Mississippi) have been selected for pilot programs, and regional action coalitions have been set up to move the recommendations forward. Your state nurses association and ARN have a vital role in the implementation of the "Future of Nursing" recommendations in your state and localities.

ARN is your partner on this journey to maximize this opportunity, advocating for leadership roles for nurses in patient-centered care, encouraging your involvement in shaping the future, and providing tools and resources to support your success. The door is open. Together, we will we step through and embrace the full value and power of our profession.