

NEW HAMPSHIRE NURSES ASSOCIATION

A POSITION STATEMENT ON HEALTHCARE TRANSFORMATION IN NH

General Statement

The New Hampshire Nurses Association (NHNA) believes that health care must be available, accessible and affordable for all. As health care is restructured, public policy makers must reflect this belief. Because of New Hampshire's rural environment, mountainous terrain and geographic distribution of residents, meeting the health care needs of its citizens and communities is a challenge for providers and public figures entrusted with that responsibility. NHNA is committed to addressing New Hampshire's health care needs by focusing on prevention. Emphasizing prevention through early and easy access; developing strategies for enhanced quality and reduced cost organized by a talented workforce, will result in a system better able to meet New Hampshire's health care needs.

Position

Access: Easy, early access to health care is imperative to prevent costly complications and promote care quality. As with the rest of the country, access to health care in New Hampshire is hampered by demand. Increasing numbers of people with preventable chronic illnesses flood the health care system. NHNA supports a restructured health care system that promotes early and efficient access to primary care providers who encourage healthy lifestyles. In New Hampshire, this easy access must include mechanisms for providing care in rural as well as urban areas and must include a multidisciplinary team of providers. Currently, there are population pockets where there is a shortage of cardiac, obstetrical, oncological and pediatric providers. Nurses in multiple practice settings including critical access facilities, community-based nursing, homecare and advanced practice are essential to care availability in many parts of our state. They stand ready to support access improvement efforts in all venues. Although specialized care may not be available throughout our state, there must be a system for efficient and affordable referral. Support for travel and inexpensive housing during intensive outpatient diagnosis and treatment will be fundamental to access.

Quality: A quality health care system must reflect the interests and demands of the people it serves. Nurses are able, through person-centered care, to acknowledge the diversity of our people and support quality care within that context. NHNA also believes that registered nurses and advanced practice nurses are uniquely educated to provide quality care at reasonable cost. NHNA recognizes evidence-based practice as a foundation for providing and measuring quality outcomes in patient care. We urge government and healthcare facilities to support these efforts. Health care providers must treat people with the most appropriate technology with an understanding of their cultural, economic, educational, and religious values, as well as their physical status.

Cost: It is reported that a small strategic investment in disease prevention and litigation reduction could result in significant savings in U.S. health care costs.

NHNA believes that health care costs could be reduced through enhanced primary care. This investment must include educating people that healthy lifestyle choices are a necessary component of reform efforts. Health education should begin with the family, continue within the school system and be adapted through the aging process. With health education in place there would be a reduction in costly medical and hospital visits. We further believe that examining causes of defensive practice (ordering tests and procedures exclusively to defend against law suit) with possible changes in malpractice laws will improve access to care, enhance care quality and reduce health care cost. This outcome requires a workforce that focuses on education and prevention - the defining characteristics of nursing practice.

Workforce: The challenge of transforming our health care system to one that promotes primary care by enhancing access, improving quality and reducing cost, must be addressed by many professionals.

A shared multidisciplinary approach increases care effectiveness. NHNA believes registered nurses (RNs) and Advanced Practice nurses are qualified and interested in sharing this challenge. The knowledge, skills and attitudes of the nursing profession position nurses well in a restructured healthcare system. Advanced Practice nurses in particular could be more widely utilized as primary care providers and prevention advocates in such a system.

Expected Outcomes: Research suggests that New Hampshire's health care system is good but is challenged by many needs. NHNA believes that by focusing on prevention in the context of access, quality, cost and a talented workforce that includes professional nurses, the transformed system will better meet the needs of all New Hampshire's citizens.

Approval

This statement was recommended by a vote of the NHNA Board of Directors on November 3, 2009 in Concord, NH.