

The Wisconsin Nursing Community Agenda for Health Care Reform

This is the response of Wisconsin's registered nurses to the growing concerns about our failing health care delivery system. Nurses believe a reformed health care delivery system is cost-effective and has objectives that focus upon *promoting, ensuring and sustaining health*.

Challenges:

- 350,000 persons go without care or enter the system sicker, at higher cost entry points
- Limited access to health care in rural communities and dense urban areas
- Decreased personal incomes as more out-of-pocket health care costs rise
- A rapidly growing aging and culturally diverse population
- Health disparities among underserved populations
- Health care workforce shortages
- Annual double digit increases in health costs
- Decreased profits for business as health insurance costs rise
- Gaps, fragmentation and duplication in delivery of services
- A "system" that is complex, confusing and wasteful
- Environmental practices that negatively impact healthy living

Four Tenets of Care:

Nurses are a critical part of the health care delivery system by promoting health and providing care during illness and disease throughout the lifespan of the individual.

Nurses advocate for the *coordination* of health services and health care access for all. The *Wisconsin Nursing Community's Agenda for Health Care Reform* identifies four tenets of care to increase the opportunities for maintaining health and sustaining a life of quality:

Health Promotion and Illness and Disease Prevention

- Prioritize prevention of illness/disease through screening, vaccinations, prompt treatment and interventions that limit the progression of disease
- Focus on healthy lifestyles and health promotion across the lifespan
- Support the health priorities in "*Healthiest Wisconsin 2010: A Partnership Plan to Improve the Health of the Public*"
- Support public policies that encourage healthy choices/decisions

Coverage that does not provide access to preventive care will continue to increase costs as consumers invariably become subject to disease and require more treatment and services.

Health Literacy

- Provide individuals with information and support to better negotiate complex health care systems and use knowledge to effectively enhance their health
- Deliver services that are culturally sensitive and appropriate
- Disseminate reliable and user-friendly information that is transparent about quality and cost
- Assure health care providers have the tools, skills and systems that support consumer health literacy
- Empower individuals to make health choices

Increased health literacy improves health outcomes.

Patient Safety

- Promote patient safety by protecting the rights and responsibilities of all health care providers to report unsafe activities or practices
- Design work environments and equipment that reduce patient and staff injuries

National estimates indicate 45,000 to 98,000 patients die each year as a result of health care errors. Health care errors are a wasteful and unnecessary drain on limited health care resources and cause patients and families great suffering.

Coordinated Chronic Disease Management

- Increase use of technologies that support communication among consumers and health care providers
- Coordinate care services that provide ongoing support to individuals and their families

Seventy-eight percent of all medical dollars are spent treating chronic disease, making people with chronic conditions the largest, most costly and fastest growing services group. The current health care infrastructure does not yet effectively nor efficiently address the needs of persons with chronic conditions.

Wisconsin Nurses – 76,000 strong provide services in all care and community settings throughout Wisconsin. Protecting the health of the public, optimizing health outcomes and meeting the expected increase in demand for health services is critical to the safety and welfare of our society. Knowledge about effective and efficient care practices among providers and consumers alike will require increased dialogue and further partnering with policy makers, businesses, social service systems and consumers. We are committed to engage fully in the work ahead.

Contact

For more information contact the Wisconsin Nurses Association at (608) 221-0383 or www.wisconsinnurses.org