

# Initiative on the Future of Nursing: Campaign for Action

by *Juliana L'Heureux, BS, RN, MHSA*

Professional nurses are essential in the efforts to improve the nation's access to quality health care, said Donna E. Shalala, chair of the Robert Wood Johnson Future of Nursing initiative. She spoke at the Nov. 30, 2010, Summit on Advancing Health Through Nursing, in Washington, D.C.



**Donna Shalala,  
chair of the RWJF/  
IOM initiative**

Shalala is the committee chair of the initiative that presented the report, *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health*, at the Institute of Medicine (IOM) with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF). Shalala served as secretary of U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (USDHHS) under President Bill Clinton.

Shalala called for collaboration among nurses and healthcare colleagues to transform the nation's healthcare system and to improve patient care. "There is not a more challenging time for health care than right now," said Shalala in the program's opening remarks. The presentation was also webcast to approximately 100 other locations in the nation including St. Joseph's College in Standish, Maine.

"Nurses can and should play a fundamental role in transforming and improving health care," she said.

The country's more than 3 million nurses are vital in implementing and supporting the objectives set forth in the 2010 Affordable Care Act, the legislation that provides the most sweeping healthcare overhaul since the 1965 creation of the Medicare and Medicaid programs, according to the report. (For more information on the report, go to <http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2010/The-Future-of-Nursing-Leading-Change-Advancing-Health.aspx>.)

Moreover, nurses were voted the most trusted healthcare professionals for eight years in a row, in a Gallop Poll reported by the American Nurses Association (ANA) on Dec. 9, 2009.

In anticipation of the passage of national healthcare reform, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Institute of Medicine launched a two-year initiative to respond to the need to assess and transform the nursing profession. "It's time for nurses to step forward and take responsibility for the future of health care," says Shalala.

Panelists at the Future of Nursing program said the initiative's final published report is similar to the 1910 Flexner Report sponsored by the Carnegie Foundation, credited with transforming the standards for physicians and medical education.

A committee was appointed by the IOM to develop the RWJF-funded initiative on the Future of Nursing. The purpose of the joint IOM/RWJF effort was to report an action plan or blueprint for the future of nursing.

Five key action-oriented objectives detailed in the report are:

- **Scope of Practice:** Nurses should practice to the full extent of their education and training.
- **Nursing Education:** Nurses should achieve higher levels of education and training through an improved education system that promotes seamless academic progression.
- **Removing Barriers to Practice:** Nurses should be

full partners, with physicians and other healthcare professionals, in redesigning health care in the U.S.

- **Data Collection:** Effective workforce planning and policy making require better data collection and information infrastructure.
- **Fostering Inter-Professional Collaboration:** Private and public funders, health care organizations, nursing education programs and nursing associations should expand opportunities for nurses to lead and manage collaborative efforts with physicians and other members of the health care team to conduct research and to redesign practice environments and health systems (The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health, 2010, S-9).

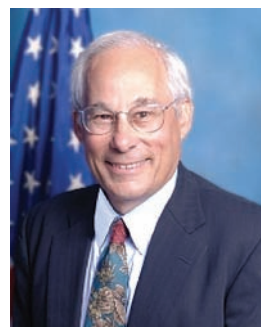
Additionally, five desired outcomes were cited to evaluate how the blueprint will be implemented:

- Establish leadership in the nursing community to help drive and engage in the Future of Nursing report's recommendations.
- Raise the visibility for the Institute of Medicine (IOM) recommendations and expand a support base to include stakeholders from key sectors, including government, higher education, consumer organizations, health professionals and others.
- Further the discussion of the IOM recommendations and contribute to the analysis and understanding of emerging perceptions about the recommendations.
- Plan action steps and follow-up to provide further engagement beyond the Nov. 30 rollout meetings. Educate local and state media about the recommendations.
- Engage state lawmakers and/or key policy leaders to learn about the recommendations.

Affiliated groups in five states—California, New Jersey, New York, Michigan and Minnesota—were selected to participate in pilot programs for the measures recommended in the Future of Nursing report:

- California—Betty Moore School of Nursing at the University of California, Davis; California Institute of Nursing and Health Care
- New Jersey—New Jersey Chamber of Commerce; New Jersey Nursing Initiative
- New York—Institute for Nursing; New York State Workforce Center; New York AARP Executive Council
- Michigan—Michigan Health Council
- Mississippi—Mississippi Department of Budgeting and Administration; Nursing Workforce Center

Donald Berwick, M.D., interim director of the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), delivered a keynote speech in support of the IOM/RWJF report. He praised the Affordable Care Act and pledged to include nursing leadership during healthcare reform's implementation.



**Donald Berwick,  
M.D., interim  
director of CMS**

Information about the Summit on Advancing Health Through Nursing and the entire report is available at [www.thefutureofnursing.org](http://www.thefutureofnursing.org).

Shalala's video statement on the Future of Nursing is available at <http://www.thefutureofnursing.org/resource/detail/video-statement-donna-e-shalala>.