

Registered Nurses: Partners in Transforming Primary Care



Recommendations from the Macy Foundation Conference on Preparing Registered Nurses for Enhanced Roles in Primary Care

Who can help alleviate the pressures on primary care?

A tremendous, available resource is the 3.7 million registered nurses (RNs)—who comprise the largest licensed health profession in the nation. RNs are the ideal team members to help expand primary care capacity, yet they have been woefully underutilized in primary care settings. Practices that have deployed registered nurses in enhanced roles have shown improved health outcomes, reduced costs, and enhanced patient satisfaction.

In June 2016, the Josiah Macy Jr. Foundation focused its annual conference on the topic of preparing registered nurses for enhanced roles in primary care. Participants included more than 40 leaders in primary care, representing academic nursing and medicine, healthcare delivery organizations, professional nursing associations, healthcare philanthropy, and more. Nursing students also were at the table.

The conference generated a series of actionable recommendations around the potential for RNs to help meet the pressing needs of primary care.

Preparing registered nurses for enhanced roles in primary care is an urgent issue; exemplary practices show that these enhanced roles are achievable.

To succeed in this endeavor, primary care and nursing education need to undergo fundamental culture change, assisted by the engagement, support, and commitment of a wide variety of stakeholders. Patients will be the ultimate beneficiaries.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Leaders of nursing schools, primary care practices, and health systems should actively facilitate culture change that elevates primary care in RN education and practice.
- 2 Primary care practices should redesign their care models to utilize the skills and expertise of RNs in meeting the healthcare needs of patients—and payers and regulators should facilitate this redesign.
- 3 Leaders of primary care practices and health systems should facilitate lifelong education and professional development opportunities in primary care and support practicing RNs in pursuing careers in primary care.
- 4 Nursing school leaders and faculty should elevate primary care content in the education of pre-licensure and RN-to-BSN nursing students.
- 5 Academia and healthcare organizations should partner to support and prepare nursing faculty to educate pre-licensure and RN-to-BSN students in primary care knowledge, skills, and perspective.
- 6 Leaders and faculty in nursing education and continuing education programs should include interprofessional education and teamwork in primary care nursing curricula.

ABOUT THE JOSIAH MACY JR. FOUNDATION

The Josiah Macy Jr. Foundation is the only national foundation solely dedicated to improving the health of the public by advancing the education and training of health professionals. Since 1930, the Macy Foundation has worked toward its mission of improving health care in the United States.

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