

# From the President

American Academy of Nursing

## INTRODUCTION TO THE PROCEEDINGS

### USING INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGY TO DECREASE THE NURSING DEMAND AND ENHANCE PATIENT CARE DELIVERY

Margaret L. McClure, President,  
American Academy of Nursing

Linda Burnes Bolton, Chair,  
American Academy of Nursing Commission on Workforce

The shortage of professional nurses in the United States, and indeed around the world, has been well documented and does not require extensive review. It is, however, safe to say that the future promises a serious public health crisis unless concerted, thoughtful action is taken with regard to this issue. Because many organizations, both public and private, have begun to work on the supply side, the American Academy of Nursing (AAN), through its Commission on Workforce, has launched a project specifically designed to attack the demand for nurses.

Attempting to decrease the demand for nurses is a daunting task, especially as one considers the demographics of our population. One area that has the potential to be of great assistance, however, is that of technology. Clearly, a great deal of technology is already deployed in health care; yet very little (in some cases almost none) has been directed toward creating efficiencies in the systems that support care and the delivery of care. Such efficiencies have the potential to enable the work of nursing in such a way that the needs of future patients will actually be able to be met by the number of professionals that we are likely to have in the workforce.

The AAN Technology Project is a multi-phase effort.<sup>1</sup> Phase I is already complete and involved an interdisciplinary invitational conference, representing

many critical health care fields and related disciplines such as engineering and architecture. This issue of *Nursing Outlook* is dedicated to the Proceedings from that exciting, constructive conference.

The purpose of the conference was to stimulate some of our nation's most creative thinkers to consider how technology might be deployed to create an ideal care delivery/work environment 5 to 10 years in the future, for example, to answer the question: "What tools could make nursing (and other disciplines more efficient and effective), while at the same time creating a safer and more satisfying environments for patients and staff?"

The conference was keynoted by 2 outstanding scholars, Dr. Robin Felder, Professor and Director, Medical Automation Research Center at the University of Virginia, and Dr. Ed O'Neil, Director Center for the Health Professions at the University of California. They set the tone for what proved to be a most productive interaction between clinicians from nursing and other health care fields, as well as members of related disciplines.

There were other plenary sessions; however, the conference participants spent the majority of their time in breakout groups, each of which was assigned a particular topic and was begun by an experienced leader in the area who launched the work of the group with a formal presentation. At the conclusion of the meeting, the participants had the opportunity

to discuss and then prioritize the outcomes of the group discussions. These proved to be creative and substantial.

The following articles summarize many of the presentations, discussions, and recommendations from those 2 days.

We are indebted to an array of sponsors whose generosity made this conference possible. The conference sponsors are listed on page A7. Please thank these sponsors whenever you have the opportunity.

We sincerely hope that these proceedings will stimulate the field to consider the possibilities that technology holds for reducing the demand for nurses while, at the same time, creating a safer environment for the delivery of care. The next phases of this AAN project will involve gathering additional input from clinicians and other stakeholders in the field; then conducting a series of pilot studies designed to identify and test various applications to further this work. Although the efforts reported here are focused on technology, we recognize that this is but one facet related to solving the nursing shortage. We believe it is, however, a major step toward ensuring safe and effective healthcare for future generations.

#### REFERENCE

1. McClure M. President's message: innovative solutions to the nursing workforce shortage. *Nursing Outlook* 2002;50:213-4.