



## **Nurses Taking Action in Texas: A Series in *Texas Nursing Voice*** (Reproduced from Jan, Feb, Mar 2012 issue)

### **Executive Nurse Bryant Actively Adopts Future of Nursing**

By Christy Meriwether, Texas Team Tactical Support and Operations Committee

*Texas Team Note: Have you wondered yet how you might actualize in your organization or community the recommendations from the Institute of Medicine Future of Nursing report? Maybe it would help to learn from other nurses – and non-nurses – in Texas about what they’re doing to take action.*

*In this first-in-a-series of personal reports, the Texas Team Action Coalition, convened to advance the Future of Nursing: Campaign for Action, is sharing some of the stories of those who have already joined the Campaign for Action and are moving forward to change the future of nursing in Texas. Gerald’s story follows. We hope it gives you inspiration. And we’d love to hear from you.*

*If you’ve already begun to take action for nursing in Texas, let us know. Send us your story about what you’re doing so that we might share it. Please contact [tneditorial@texasnurses.org](mailto:tneditorial@texasnurses.org).*

### **Gerald’s Story**

“How often do you get the chance to make a difference in the future direction of your profession? I was apprehensive at best when my DNP (doctor of nursing practice) capstone advisor challenged me to read the Institute of Medicine’s report, the *Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health*, and make it actionable. As I read, I realized it was a roadmap that would significantly change nurses’ roles, responsibilities and education so they can better contribute to improving the U.S. health care delivery system. The report was truly a call to action and I could not ignore it!

In my role as chief nursing officer for Baptist Hospitals of Southeast Texas, I am responsible for a two hospital, not-for-profit system. In the system, we have a total of 608 beds and about 700 registered nurses. I am a member of my organization’s senior team and very fortunate to have an incredibly supportive CEO and Board of Trustees. With this said, I will explain my journey in the hope that it can possibly ignite your enthusiasm for participating in the Future of Nursing: *Campaign for Action*, the national implementation of recommendations in the IOM report.

I have taken several steps to actively adopt the campaign. As a DNP student, I first presented an executive overview of the *Future of Nursing* report to my fellow students. Then, I presented the overview to my organization's senior team, Board of Trustees, nursing directors, and leaders and staff nurses from various shared governance councils at my organization's annual nursing leadership retreat. I have also seized the opportunity to share the report with the local chapter of Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing® and the Rotary Club. Additionally, I am working with the local university nursing division leadership and other local CNOs to begin a grass roots communication campaign.

Early on, it was crystal clear to me and my organization that we needed to internalize and act on two of the key messages in the report. One of the messages is: *Nurses should achieve higher levels of education and training through an improved education system that promotes seamless academic progression.* I realized, BSN-prepared nurses are a MUST because they support my organization's commitment to assure the highest level of care delivery for our population of patients, thus improving community health and wellness.

The second key message of the report is: *Nurses should practice to the full extent of their education and training.* This is definitely related but not limited to the Advanced Practice RN (APRN) and the confines placed on them by our state. Nurses play a critical role in health care and it would help greatly if payers and CMS (Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services) would support regulatory requirements which allow them to practice to their full potential. The APRN's relationship with medical peers and other health care professionals needs to continue to evolve as a collaborative not subordinate practice.

With incredible support from the Board of Trustees and system CEO, the IOM report and these two key messages were used to develop our nursing strategic plan for the next two years and support the following:

- Increase APRN roles by strategically hiring and placing them in primary care roles, disease management roles, and in positions to influence organizational clinical outcomes.
- Transition LVN employees and students from direct patient care by either supporting them in completing their RN education or placing them in non-direct care roles such as nursing assistants, unit clerks and techs.
- Set a goal to increase the percentage of BSN-prepared nurses on staff by 20 percent over the next two years.

- Create selection criteria for new hires and nurse externs, such as hiring only BSN-prepared new graduates if possible; hiring ADN graduates who will contract to complete their BSN education within five years; and only making the nurse extern role available to BSN students.
- Develop tuition reimbursement guidelines and educational levels for both MSN-prepared and doctorate nursing staff by establishing pay grades for advanced education. Tuition reimbursement plans for graduate and doctorate education is being developed and first priority is given to reimbursement candidates that are pursuing their RN-to-BSN.

I challenge you to explore the IOM Future of Nursing report to determine actionable steps you can take in your personal career trajectory and/or as a leader to actualize the IOM goals and to advance the health care of Texans.”

*About Gerald: Gerald Bryant, MSN, RN, NEA-BC is chief nursing officer at Baptist Hospitals of Southeast Texas in Beaumont and Orange. He will graduate from his DNP program in May of 2012.*

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