

Embracing Change



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KEYWORDS

- Affordable care act • Care coordination • Change • Change theory • Employment
- Healthcare outcomes • Hospital readmissions • Institute of Medicine

KEY POINTS

- Nurses have an obligation to ensure that all care interventions are based on the latest evidence-based practice.
- All nurses need to learn how to develop leadership and innovation skills and to positively change nursing practice and contribute to cost-effective health care for populations.
- To ensure patients that the care given is evidence-based and current, nurses must be lifelong learners, and lifelong learning requires constant change and adaptation.
- Embracing change theory as a framework for effecting change at the bedside or at the organizational level will likely ensure success where failure is so often encountered.

INTRODUCTION

As a practicing nurse, there are many claims to how one spends professional work time and personal time, and the 2 options command strains in the decisions nurses make regarding professional and personal commitments of time and effort. The idea of being a change agent and thriving amidst change seems overwhelming at times. However, many changes are presently occurring in the United States that are affecting nurses' professional lives and require the nurse to be open to change. There are many driving forces presently in the evolving design and financing of health care that are impacting the need for change from nurses; these variables include a poor international ranking in quality of health care, professional education requirement goals issued by the Institute of Medicine (IOM), change in focus of care delivery models, the Affordable Care Act (ACA) implementation, quality assurance requirements and reporting responsibilities of quality metrics, and reimbursement for health care services. The time is now for nurses to be lifelong learners prepared for change and to serve as a change agent in any health care setting. All nurses need to learn

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how to develop leadership and innovation skills and to positively change nursing practice and contribute to cost-effective health care for populations.

Nurses have an obligation to ensure that all care interventions are based on the latest evidence-based practice. To ensure patients that the care given is evidence-based and current, nurses must be lifelong learners, and lifelong learning requires constant change and adaptation. As the health care system is in a state of evolution, patients are expecting to be included in informed decision-making regarding their health care choices. Informed decision-making requires developing a relationship with patients so that the nurse can understand what is important and meaningful in each patient's life. Quality relationships with patients also assist patients to value their health status and to embrace behavior change that improves health status. This article describes the challenges and innovations that are presently emerging in the health care environment and prepares the nurse for thriving in the multiple settings where health care reform is occurring. The nurse is guided in using change theory to prepare professionally to meet the changing employment needs as a valued employee participating in the new care delivery models. Finally, the nurse is introduced to national efforts to improve quality and safety and is guided in instituting change processes that support the nurse in taking active involvement for contributing to the financial success of the enterprise where the nurse practices.

CHALLENGES THAT REQUIRE CHANGE BY NURSES

There are presently many challenges in health care in the United States that will demand nurses to embrace change as health care emerges into a more accountable system of care. A respected recent report ranks the United States last in quality when compared with 10 other western nations.¹ Although ranking last, the United States spent more than any of the other 10 nations. The United Kingdom spent \$3405 per person on health care and the United States spent \$8508; the United Kingdom ranked third in achieving certain health-related performance outcomes. The report stated that US providers have difficulty in sharing patient information and coordinating care dealing with administrative needs. Nurses can certainly contribute to coordinating care for patients and ensuring health-related information is shared between providers. Nursing must own the deficiencies in the US health care system and become a part of the solution.

The place of employment for nurses is gradually changing from the hospital as the central location to outpatient sites. Presently, approximately 60% of registered nurses (RNs) are employed in hospitals.² The Department of Labor expects the rate of employment in hospitals will slow, while increasing in outpatient settings.³ More nursing services have increasingly transitioned to community, outpatient, and home settings. The Department of Labor projects RN employment to grow 19% from 2012 to 2022.³ Uncertainty exists for nurses as hospitals face a shift from payment for number of admissions to payment for better quality and value.⁴ According to Marilyn Tavenner, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) administrator, who is a nurse, both the outpatient and hospital areas of job opportunities for nurses will be related to ensuring improved quality, safety, and care coordination.⁵ Nurses are critical for planning and executing effective discharge and transition from the hospital to alternate sites of care. To prevent readmissions, nursing skills in engaging patients and families in their health care before discharge and after discharge will be valued. Nurses also need to be looking at future trends in health care reform and plan for where jobs will grow based on the new incentives for providing preventive care interventions early in the care continuum.

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