

Health Care Reform: Improving Quality of Care

ANA believes that health care is a basic human right, and supports the World Health Organization's challenge – originally articulated in 1978, and reaffirmed as late as 2007 – for all nations to provide a basic level of health care to their citizens. The U.S. is the only industrialized country that does not explicitly express a commitment to its people to take care of at least their basic health needs.

A reformed health care system must deliver consistent, high-quality care that eliminates disparities based on socioeconomic and geographic factors. The quality of care must be maximized by encouraging collaborative teams of health care professionals to provide well-coordinated services and practices based on evidence of what treatments are most effective in producing the best outcomes.

The health care reform proposals currently under consideration in Congress would build upon our current system to strengthen and preserve the coverage many already enjoy while creating new access to affordable coverage for the millions who are currently left out.

ANA wants to improve the quality of health care through these provisions in health reform legislation:

- ANA supports the implementation of policies that reflect the principles for high-quality care established by the Institutes of Medicine: safe, effective, patient-centered, timely, efficient and equitable health care. Examples of how these principles would affect nursing practice include:
 - ✓ **Safe** – Eliminate hazardous products in the work environment, invest in safe patient handling equipment, encourage identification and analysis of errors, guard against workplace violence.
 - ✓ **Effective** – Fund dissemination of information on evidence-based practice, offer financial incentives for facilities and providers who implement best practices.
 - ✓ **Patient-centered** – Encourage patient responsibility for health and decision-making, provide incentives for chronic disease management programs. Nurses play a big role in patient education and disease management.
 - ✓ **Timely** – Eliminate delays by ensuring sufficient staff and space.
 - ✓ **Efficient** – Use the most cost-effective providers and therapeutic options in the most appropriate setting. This could include nurse-managed clinics.
 - ✓ **Equitable** – Quality of care must be equal regardless of citizenship, race, culture, socioeconomic status or other individual variables.
- ANA supports comparative effectiveness research, which evaluates how different treatment therapies for a certain health condition compare to each other. With this information, patient care plans can be based on evidence of what is most effective and cost-efficient to produce positive patient outcomes.
- ANA believes that the quality of health care also depends on individuals taking responsibility for their own personal health and care, and their ability to make informed decisions about their health. Under a reformed health system, the holistic approach of nurses in educating the individual, family and community on health matters should assume heightened importance.

- ANA believes that to improve the quality of care, it is essential to measure the quality by evaluating patient outcomes. ANA has developed nursing-sensitive measures – patient outcomes that can be tied to the quality of nursing -- through its National Database for Nursing Quality Indicators®. NDNQI® aims to improve patient safety and the quality of care by using the data to make quality improvements.
- Access to care must be affordable – reasonably priced in a variety of settings, with patient co-payments and other out-of-pocket costs based on the patient’s ability to pay so that cost is never a barrier to necessary care.
- Access to care must be acceptable to the patient, meaning services that are respectful of the patients’ culture and values and promote patient understanding and involvement in treatment decisions. Nurses’ holistic approach offers such recognition for the patient and his/her family and community.

About ANA’s Support for Universal Health Care

ANA’s House of Delegates, our representative policy-setting body democratically elected by our Constituent (state) Member Associations, voted to adopt a stance in support of guaranteed, affordable, high-quality health care for all.

ANA believes that health care is a basic human right, and supports the World Health Organization’s challenge – for all nations to provide a basic level of health care to their citizens.

ANA believes that a system focused on primary care, prevention and chronic disease management can alleviate much of the expensive acute care that currently takes its toll in human suffering, as well as dollars. It is a worthwhile national investment.

We also believe that nursing’s strengths as a profession -- providing holistic care that considers the individual, family and community -- matches the emphasis in current health reform proposals.

ANA’s health reform advocacy is guided by these principles, created by our membership. If proposed legislation did not match ANA’s goals for both nurses and patients, we would not be in support, regardless of the sponsoring political party.