

HPNA, NBCHPN, and HPNF Response to the IOM Report:
***Dying in America: Improving Quality and Honoring
Individual Preferences Near the End of Life***

All Americans deserve high-quality, coordinated, practical, and affordable care in the context of serious illness. The newly released Institute of Medicine (IOM) report identifies deficiencies in the care that Americans facing serious illness currently receive and opportunities for improvement through the provision of palliative care. Palliative care is aimed at improving quality of life, relief of symptoms, and decreasing the stress associated with a serious illness, regardless of diagnosis or stage of illness. As such, we believe that palliative care encompasses much more than care of the dying and is most effective when provided by a team of professionals, including nurses, social workers, physicians, spiritual care providers, and others. Palliative nursing is a recognized specialty and has a defined scope and standards of practice (*Palliative Nursing: Scope and Standards of Practice, an Essential Resource for Hospice and Palliative Nurses*, 2014).

The IOM report identifies five key points to address the needs of the seriously ill. As leaders in transforming the care and culture of serious illness by advancing expert care in serious illness, the Hospice and Palliative Nurses Association (HPNA), National Board for Certification of Hospice and Palliative Nurses (NBCHPN), and the Hospice and Palliative Nurses Foundation (HPNF), embrace the challenges and opportunities that are presented in the IOM's report. We believe that hospice and palliative nurses, as members of the interdisciplinary team, perform integral roles in providing quality, compassionate care to individuals with serious illness and their families. The summary below contains core elements of palliative nursing as related to the five key points included in the IOM report.

Care Delivery that is Patient Centered and Family Focused

- ❖ Professional nurses are integral to the health care delivery system and are the constant across the lifespan and care settings.
- ❖ Bio-psychosocial approaches to care, systems thinking, and focus on the family as the unit of care are central to nursing education and practice at basic and advanced levels.
- ❖ Care coordination is a core competency for nurses who routinely promote high-value health care.
- ❖ Nurses provide palliative care in many settings, including hospitals, clinics, skilled nursing facilities, other community-based settings, and the patients' homes.
- ❖ Palliative care nurses foster the self-management of illness, associated pain, and associated symptoms among persons with serious illness and their families.
- ❖ Nurses empower family caregivers through education, coaching, and mentoring.
- ❖ Professional nurses direct care provided by non-professional caregivers.

Communication

- ❖ Nurses spend more time with patients than any other member of the health care team. Studies have shown that as much as 90 percent of all observed patient communication with the health care team was initiated and concluded by a nurse (Close and Gott, *Nursing Mirror, Journal of Advanced Nursing*).
- ❖ Basic nursing education focuses on core concepts of communication.
- ❖ Advocacy is a core element of palliative nursing practice, which supports patient self-determination and ensures health care preferences are honored (HPNA 2013).
- ❖ Palliative nursing standards of practice promote advance care planning (HPNA 2013).

Education

- ❖ Nurses should achieve higher levels of education and training to respond to increasing demands.
 - All nurses, regardless of practice area, need basic and ongoing training in palliative care.
 - Advance practice nurses can enable and increase access to palliative care.
- ❖ More programs are needed to encourage continuing competence through certification in palliative care. There are few registered nurses certified as hospice and palliative nurses within the total nursing workforce. Out of more than one million nurses, there are only approximately 13,000 certified on hospice and palliative care (NBCHPN, AACN 2013).
- ❖ NBCHPN provides seven credentialing programs within the specialty of palliative nursing and is a leader in supporting continued competence in palliative care.
- ❖ HPNA, NBCHPN, and HPNF have strong collaborative ties with many specialty nursing and health care organizations whose members care for seriously ill patients.
- ❖ HPNA has an array of educational products and programs to support both basic (primary) palliative care training across specialties and expert palliative care.
- ❖ HPNF provides scholarships and awards that support education in palliative care.

Policies and Payment

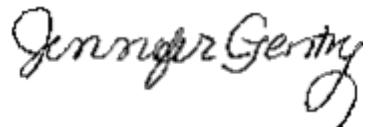
- ❖ “Respect for the inherent worth, dignity, and human rights of every individual is a fundamental principle that underlies all nursing practice” (ANA Code of Ethics 2011). Palliative care nurses advocate for policies that promote health equity among persons with serious illness and their families.
- ❖ Nurses are strong advocates for public policy, including measures that promote access to care, remove barriers that restrict quality pain and symptom management, and reduce health disparities and inequity.
- ❖ Barriers preventing nurses from practicing to the full extent of their education and scope of practice currently exist and restrict access to palliative care.
- ❖ Policy and regulatory barriers exist that limit the ability of advanced practice registered nurses to function fully within the scope of their education and training.
- ❖ Current policies and regulations limit reimbursement for the care that nurses are trained to provide related to care transitions, innovative delivery models, and patient-caregiver communication.

Public Education and Engagement

- ❖ Nurses are the most trusted profession (Gallup 2013) and are trusted by the public for honesty and high ethical standards.
- ❖ Nurses are patient advocates capable of leading public discourse and education.
- ❖ Nursing has a long history of advocating for and responding to the needs of the seriously ill and dying.

In summary, though the IOM report is titled, “Dying in America,” the need for palliative care traverses the spectrum of serious illness. The specialty of palliative nursing is well positioned to partner with the health care team and lead efforts that support the kind of expert care that seriously ill Americans deserve.

Our three boards of directors have just completed strategic planning for 2015-2017. The initiatives within the plans for "advancing expert care" support our shared pillars of excellence in education, competence, leadership, research, and advocacy. The plans contain numerous initiatives that support and enhance the role of palliative nursing and the initiatives within this IOM report.



Jennifer Gentry, ANP BC, GNP, ACHPN, FPCN
President, Hospice and Palliative Nurses Association



Kathie Kobler, MS, APN, PCNS-BC, CHPPN
President, National Board for Certification of Hospice and Palliative Nurses



Jane Sidwell, MSW, RN, FPCN
President, Hospice and Palliative Nurses Foundation



Sally Welsh, MSN, RN, NEA-BC
CEO, HPNA, NBCHPN, HPNF