The Institute of Medicine Report on the Future of Nursing: What it means for Advancing Nursing Education

By
Vallire D. Hooper, PhD, RN, CPAN, FAAN
Manager, Nursing Research
Mission Health Nursing Education and Research, Asheville, NC

In 2008, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) brought together a group of diverse, multi-disciplinary healthcare experts with the goal of developing action-oriented recommendations to serve as a blueprint for guiding the future of nursing. This 600 page report, published in October of 2010, outlined four key recommendations, the second of which directly addresses the educational preparation and advancement of nurses. (Hooper, 2011; Institute of Medicine, 2010; Odom-Forren, 2011)

IOM Education Recommendations
Recommendation two of this report states that “nurses should achieve higher levels of education and training through an improved education system that promotes seamless academic progression (Institute of Medicine, 2010).” Goals associated with this recommendation include:
- The proportion of nurses with a baccalaureate degree should be increased to 80% by the year 2020.
- The number of masters and doctorally prepared nurses should be doubled by 2020.
- All nurses should be engaged in life-long learning.
The report recommends that Diploma and Associate degree graduates should progress to a Baccalaureate degree within 5 years of graduation. It also recommends that 20% of Baccalaureate graduates progress to a Master’s or Doctoral degree within 5 years of graduation. (Institute of Medicine, 2010)

Advanced Skills and Pathway Choices
Although these recommendations may sound lofty and unattainable, the reality is that as healthcare continues to advance and patient care becomes more complicated, nurses will need advanced skills in care management, leadership, interdisciplinary teamwork, problem solving, and much more. These advanced skills will be imperative in supporting the patient as they traverse the ever-evolving healthcare system. (Lavizzo-Mourey, 2012)

The path to advancing one’s degree is diverse and can be accomplished through numerous routes, as noted in Figure 1. Pathway choices may be impacted by program availability, financial resources/support, expected time to graduation, career goals, and expected time remaining in one’s career. (Hooper, 2012)

Figure 1. Pathways to Advancing Nursing Degrees


PhD/DNP = PhD and DNP (some nurses choose to attain both degrees)
Educational Efforts in North Carolina
North Carolina, with the support of the Foundation for Nursing Excellence and the state legislature, is working diligently to increase educational opportunities across all academic levels. (Foundation for Nursing Excellence, n.d.) One program that is currently in place is the “Regionally Increasing Baccalaureate Nurses (RIBN) project.” Initiated here in Western North Carolina (WNC), this project partners Associate and Baccalaureate programs to provide for a seamless transition to a BSN degree within one year of graduating with an Associate degree (ADN). The first cohort of graduates from the WNC program is expected in the spring of 2014, and the program is currently being expanded around the state. Groups are also working on expanding graduate education opportunities, particularly in the area of advanced practice nursing.

IOM Report—a National Template
The IOM Report on the Future of Nursing provides a national template for the advancement of nursing practice and participation in the continued evolution of the healthcare environment. Nurses, as the 24/7 bedside care provider, are well-positioned to impact the quality and safety of patient care on a daily basis. A personal commitment to life-long learning and advancing one’s academic education will better assure that each nurse, regardless of their position and area of practice, are adequately prepared to face the challenges that the future will surely bring.

References


