

The Future of Nursing in North Carolina

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Nurses... on the cover of the *North Carolina Medical Journal*. That’s right, the cover. Part of me wasn’t surprised. North Carolina’s nurses have an impressive history of contributing to health and health care in the state—from establishing its first civilian hospital to offering of the nation’s first clinical master’s program in nursing. And this history has been characterized by positive collaboration among the health professions. For instance, I am one of three nurses on the board of the North Carolina Institute of Medicine, which publishes the journal.

The July/August 2011 issue was devoted, almost entirely, to nursing. It featured a policy forum on the [Future of Nursing in North Carolina](#), which arose from last spring’s Statewide Summit for Creating the Future of Nursing and Health Care in North Carolina. The Summit convened leaders from around the state to discuss how to implement recommendations set forth in a landmark report on nursing from the national Institute of Medicine (IOM).

When *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health* was released in October 2010, many in our state immediately saw the parallels between its recommendations and some of the work under way here for a number of years, such as increasing the number of nurses with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) or higher degree.

And there’s subsequently been so much enthusiasm for the [North Carolina Future of Nursing Action Coalition](#)—one of 36 state coalitions formed through the national Future of Nursing: *Campaign for Action*—that we’ve organized ourselves into four task forces to address each of

our priorities: practice barriers, leadership, BSN and workforce data. The evidence base provided by the IOM report has been a great asset to our efforts.

Editor in Chief Thomas C. Ricketts III introduced the policy forum by writing that nursing is rising to the challenge of quality and efficiency in health care and that a convergence of the health professions is necessary to a healthy society.

The concept that health professionals and others need to come together to find common solutions to our health care challenges is foundational. Rather than remain in our silos, it is more productive to talk, perhaps to disagree, and then to work toward consensus. Having such a prestigious *medical* journal use its pages to acknowledge nurses' critical, integral role sends a clear message that the time to talk is now.

Clearly, I'm not the only reader who found much of interest in the issue. Dr. Ricketts says it has generated the largest number of hits ever to the journal's website. I'd say that's reason for optimism.