

**Highlights of External Advisory Committee Meeting
May 11, 2004
Southeast Regional Center for Health Workforce Studies
Cecil G. Sheps Center for Health Services Research
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill**

The center held its inaugural external advisory board meeting at the Sheps Center on May 11, 2004. Graham Adams, Regina Benjamin, Peter Buerhaus, Martha Jo Edwards, Tim Henderson and Gregory Strayhorn attended as members of the committee. Thomas C. Ricketts and Barbara Mark chaired the meeting. Peter Neenan from the North Carolina Employment Security Commission, Tom Bacon, Director of the North Carolina AHEC, George Sheldon, Chair Emeritus of the UNC Department of Surgery and Donna Havens, UNC School of Nursing attended as special guests.

Tim Henderson provided the keynote presentation on “The View from Washington and the Nation.” Tom Ricketts summarized currently operative projects and Cheryl Jones and Barbara Mark described nursing workforce projects underway at UNC and within the Regional Center.

The committee and guests discussed priorities for research and the needs of policy makers in developing future programs for health workforce. That discussion developed a series of recommended areas for future research and analysis.

Potential areas and issues for research

Foreign trained healthcare workers

This applies to a wide range of health professionals. While national attention has been paid to physicians, there are local and regional variations in the immigration and utilization of other professionals

- Research issues to be explored in the SE Region:
 - Document the professions where there are international implications (immigration, emigration).
 - Language barriers between healthcare workers and clients/patients: between foreign trained healthcare workers and clients/patients, as well as between immigrant clients/patients and their healthcare providers.
 - Technical competency of foreign trained healthcare workers.
 - Is there a need for monitoring.
- Collaboration opportunity:
 - Monitoring programs – identify potential groups or individuals addressing this issue in states such as Florida.

Generational Differences

Is there a Generation “Y” characterization that affects choice of career? Can this be measured and characterized in health professions?

- Research issues to be explored in the SE Region:

- Are there differences in career selection and expectations of students coming out of the schools? How does this impact on healthcare workforce training enrollments, retention after graduation?

Medical Malpractice

There were observations concerning the effects of medical malpractice and the continued perception of crisis.

- Research issues to be explored in the SE Region:
 - Documentation is needed to assess the impact of rising insurance costs on scope of practice for practitioners, retention in the health workforce, and use of alternative services (nurse midwives vs. OB/GYN).
 - Other indicators may be more appropriate, e.g. curtailing use of part-time and faculty practitioners, ending rotations.
- Collaboration / funding opportunity:
 - State-wide associations for specialties, other special interest groups.
 - AHECs should be surveyed for potential collaborators in their states.

Workforce Diversity (Race and Ethnicity)

- Research issues to be explored in the SE Region:
 - Collect and disseminate healthcare workforce disparity statistics for Region IV. Determine if SE Region trends diverge from national trends.
 - Examine existing data state by state to determine differences in retention between non-whites (which may indicate a lack of advancement opportunities).
 - Examine if racial and ethnic mix between providers and patients makes a difference on health outcomes.
 - Examine race and ethnic mix in career paths and geographic distribution after training. Focus on historical black colleges or institutions with a strong minority commitment. (Nursing data can be used to determine school of graduation.)
 - Examine marital status of nurses and size of families to determine if there are differences in mobility and retention of nurses. (Are married nurses and/or nurses with dependents more likely to move or leave nursing careers?)
- Collaboration / funding opportunity:
 - HRSA is providing funding for studies of disparities in health care that may have workforce implications.

Technical Assistance to Region IV

The Center will compile and disseminate health workforce data sources and policies state by state for the region. The goal is to provide more depth and detail than what is currently available through the Health Policy Tracking Service. Dissemination of such information would need to be marketed carefully, so that those who want and need the information would receive it in a timely fashion. There may be a need to divide this into areas of specific professional interest, or “hot spots” such as nursing, dentists and surgeons. Research issues to be explored:

- Examine supply and distribution issues for specific areas, such as the supply of surgeons in the region.
- What affect does nursing hours and participation reduction have on the nursing labor supply? A growing trend in reduction of hours (as nurses provide more long term care

for family members) will most likely have a negative impact. Peter Buerhaus suggested we should look at what is going on in the region for this issue vs. national trends.

- From existing data, sector by sector, describe the age structure of the nursing workforce and compare SE trends to national. Is there a clustering by age? For example, in operating rooms surgical nurses are younger. Older nurses seem to be clustering in outpatient services.
- Collect basic data on gender in dentistry and other segments of health care workers and provide snapshots for states in the region.
- There is a link between economic development and health workforce issues. As states become more attentive to economic drivers, having data looking at these linkages would be helpful.
- Collaboration / funding opportunity:
 - Explore data available from the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Employment Security Commission and continue to work with these groups on WIBS issues
 - If this could be done for the states in the SE Region, this may be a service that state hospital associations and special interest groups would be interested in purchasing.
 - Develop joint work with the Labor Departments in the state and the region.

Allied Health/EMS

- Research issues to be explored in the SE Region:
 - Develop a model to project the impact of allied health shortages on service and practice, e.g., shortage of imaging technicians on physician referrals and overall healthcare delivery systems. Data may be available through the NC Employment Security Commission and similar type state offices.
 - There is a growing interest in EMS issues and links to bioterrorism. A growing concern is the quality of the services and training.
 - Evaluate effectiveness of programs designed to retrain state workforce for careers in healthcare.
- Collaboration / funding opportunity:
 - NC Employment Security Commission, state departments of labor and offices of economic development.

Relationship of quality to supply

- Research issues to be explored in the SE Region:
 - Provide leadership in pushing and promoting the education of a workforce that is more sophisticated in the science of quality improvement. Note: the Sheps Center collects hospital discharge data and has looked at data on medication errors and differences across various facilities. There may be ways to build on this.
 - Nursing faculty shortages appear to be an increasing issue. What effects will this have on the region's ability to react to impending nursing shortages? National data does not have the depth and breadth for state level policy makers. The issue and impact of faculty shortages applies to the allied health professions as well.
 - A possible area of technical assistance would be to provide some uniform measures that could be applied across states to help rural clinics comply with new QI/performance improvement requirements.

- Examine the rise in health centers of excellence and their impact. There will be centers growing that address the increasing obesity problem. The workforce is very collaborative in these types of centers, which addresses quality of care issues.
- Assisted living care centers are increasing and the quality of care is decreasing. This would be an area suggesting further research.
- Collaboration / funding opportunity:
 - There are funding opportunities coming out of HRSA and AHRQ for research in bioterrorism training.
 - Vanderbilt has some initiatives on training the workforce to respond to bioterrorism. The link would be evaluation of the effectiveness of such programs. Louisiana is doing some work in this area and Peter Buerhaus will communicate further on this.

Alternative Models of Care

- Research issues to be explored in the SE Region:
 - Impact of alternative models for dentistry on quality and access to care.

Mental Health

- Research issues in general:
 - Impact of decreased budgets for mental health services on other services, and capacity of other health workforce professions to adequately address increased demand. Focus on rural areas and substitution and interaction of professions.
 - Better articulate the issues and future problems for this area. The issues of mental health workforce requires a new “frame” for understanding policy, we should work to develop that frame.
- Collaboration opportunities:
 - The workforce group should explore collaborations with the Mental Health Program at Sheps Center and faculty in the School of Nursing.

Dennis Zaenger, Erin Fraher, Susan Dyson, Tom Ricketts