



Consensus Study Report HIGHLIGHTS



The demand for nurses will increase in the decade ahead due to the health needs of the aging population, increases in behavioral and mental health conditions, increases in lack of access to primary health care, high maternal mortality rates, worsening physician shortages, and other sociodemographic factors and health workforce imbalances. The nursing workforce will also face challenges from within the health care system and the health care workforce, and from health-related policies and other factors that affect the scope of practice, size, distribution,

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A new generation of nurse leaders is now needed—one that recognizes the importance of diversity and equity and is able to use and build on the increasing evidence base supporting the link between SDOH and health status. This requires the contributions of nurses in all roles and settings in a collaborative system of leadership. Nurse leaders can play an important role in acknowledging the history of racism within the profession and health care and help mitigate the effects of discrimination and implicit bias on health.

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The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed chasms within an already fragmented U.S. health care system, resulting in significant excess mortality and morbidity and glaring health inequities. Most affected are communities of color, who suffer from the compound disadvantages of racism, poverty, workplace hazards, limited health care access, and pre-existing health conditions. Articulating the roles and responsibilities of nurses in disaster response and public health emergency management is critical to the nation's capacity to plan for and respond to these types of events.

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Nurses' health and well-being are affected by the demands of their workplace, and in turn affect the quality of and safety of the care they provide. Thus, it is essential to address the systems, structures, and policies that create workplace hazards and stresses that lead to burnout, fatigue, and poor physical and mental health among the nursing workforce. The pandemic has illuminated and exacerbated the day-to-day demands of nursing. Nurses often cope with unrealistic workloads; insufficient resources and protective equipment; risk of infection; stigma directed at health care workers; and the mental, emotional, and moral burdens of caring for patients with a new and unpredictable disease and helping with contact tracing and testing. To help address the many SDOH, nurses need to first feel healthy, well, and supported. Policy makers, nurse employers, nursing schools, nurse leaders, and nursing associations all have a role in achieving this goal. Ultimately, the health and well-being of nurses influence the quality, safety, and cost of the care they provide, as well as organizations and systems of care.

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Nurses are bridge builders and collaborators who engage and connect with people, communities, and organizations to promote health and well-being. They need ongoing support from the systems that educate, train, employ, and enable nurses to advance health equity. The COVID-19 pandemic has starkly revealed the challenges nurses face every day, and has added significant new challenges. It has also given some nurses more autonomy, shifted payment models, and sparked overdue conversations about dismantling racism in health care. Policy makers and system leaders should seize this moment to support, strengthen, and transform the largest segment of the health workforce so nurses can help chart our country's course to good health and well-being for all.



2020-2030

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