

From the Desk of Dean Stuart

MEDICAL UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA • COLLEGE OF NURSING

SEPTEMBER | 2010

If you're not at the table, you're on the menu

By Dean Gail Stuart, PhD, RN, FAAN



The new health care law is neither feast nor famine. But it does promise to change the "health care recipe" in important ways. There are some areas of importance that we, as nurses, need to not only understand, but to incorporate into our educational, research and clinical programs.

Clinically - There will be increased emphasis on access to care, prevention, primary care services, the patient health care home, the integration of mental health and physical health services, chronic care management, care coordination, patient safety, and community

engagement and empowerment.

Research – There will be a growing focus on genetics, comparative effectiveness, cost-analyses, implementation and team science, translational research, community based participatory research, and research dissemination.

Workforce – There will be an unbelievable challenge ahead of us in preparing the right number of health care providers, the right type of providers, the right competencies among providers for the new clinical challenges they will face, and the right geographical distribution of the existing and future health care workforce.

Which brings me to the heart of the matter for us as nurses – if we are not at the table, then we will be on the menu. It is clear that major decisions will be made in all of these areas, and never has the need for a nursing voice and a nursing seat at the banquet been more needed. In the days ahead there will be opportunities for us to provide evidence, relate stories, demonstrate competencies and make visible how we, as nurses, are the backbone and glue of the health care system. So I encourage you to seize every opportunity, every invitation, every forum to gain a seat at the table as a nurse. If we miss this opportunity, it may not come again...Gail

