

Guest Editorial

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Securing the Future of Children's Health

For the past 35 years the PNCB's role delineation research has profiled changes in pediatric nursing practice and identified challenges that threaten positive health care to children and families. Throughout its work, the Pediatric Nursing Certification Board (PNCB) has recognized that securing the future of children's health and thereby creating conditions for healthy communities are challenged by socioeconomic, disease, and disparity issues. The estimated 74 million children in the United States represent one-quarter of the nation's population. Yet, health care services, health insurance, and wellness elude them.

Today, 18% of children are uninsured. Eight in 10 of the uninsured (children and adults combined) are in working families, with approximately two-thirds of the uninsured poor or near-poor (The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, 2009). Children in poor families are five times as likely to be in fair or poor health (5%) as children in families that are not poor (1%) (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2008). Approximately 30% are afflicted with health issues ranging from asthma to depression to special care needs. Injury, birth defects, homicide, and cancer threaten children's lives as the predominant causes of death (Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, 2002; Families USA, 2006; National Vital Statistics System, 2006). Coupled with these health issues and risk factors is the changing landscape of health care reform and policy in the nation. Forces of social change, policy action, technology, and economics are creating unprecedented impact on all aspects of health care. To secure quality health care for children, a response to these challenges must be led by

pediatric nurses, who are the defining element of any health care environment serving children. This specialty is pivotal to securing positive health outcomes for children and their families. As expert knowledgeable providers, pediatric nurses lead and contribute daily through their intellectual prowess and competency skill sets to secure children's health, one child and family at a time.

As the largest corps of pediatric health care providers, pediatric nurses serve not only as caregivers but as change agents as well. They are at the front line of care and work tirelessly to improve children's health, systems, and communities. However, challenges, such as workforce shortages, resource maldistribution, and increased complexity of systems and care, may compromise their ability to maximally contribute and influence the future of children's health.

This landscape of children's health and pediatric nursing was the catalyst for the PNCB's Board of Directors to plan and implement an historic summit of 17 organizations with a vested interest in child health and pediatric nursing. Not in the history of the specialty has such a landmark event occurred. The collaboration and consensus reached during this summit heralds the beginning of change in securing child health through collaboration and pediatric nursing contributions.

Concept, Desired Outcomes, Success Measures

The Pediatric Nursing Invitational Forum (Forum) was initiated by the PNCB to bring together experts and thought leaders in pediatric nursing to examine the specialty and its role in shaping a healthy future for children, their families and the nation. On November 11 and 12, 2009, these diverse stakeholders in pediatrics with education, practice, administration, policy, credentialing and research knowledge, and expertise came together to find common purpose for maximizing the contributions of the pedi-

atric nursing specialty to the future of children's health. Over the course of one and a half days, 25 individuals from 17 organizations brought their best thinking to bear on issue identification and strategic solutions.

The purpose of the Forum was to: *Strengthen and secure the well being and welfare of children and their families through the contributions of pediatric nursing.*

The desired outcome of the Forum included:

- Identification and agreement on the most urgent issues before children's health and pediatric nursing.
- Consensus on a collaborative platform to address the issues.
- Formulation of a plan to realize the preferred future of children's health and the pediatric nursing specialty.

Consensus among the experts was reached on several key beliefs that influence the vision of pediatric nursing's contribution to securing children's health. These beliefs include:

- All children require a healthy, safe environment to prosper.
- All children require access to culturally appropriate health care services.
- Pediatric nurses are uniquely qualified to provide holistic, integrated, cost-effective care to children and their families.
- Pediatric nurses are providers of choice for the child population.

As agreed to by the Forum experts, the vision for the preferred future of children's health is:

Culturally sensitive, family centered care provided within communities, with emphasis on health promotion, disease and injury prevention, wellness, and healthy development delivered by expert practitioners who are knowledgeable, competent, and skilled in the care of children and their families.

Guided by this vision and their individual and collective knowledge, the experts identified and agreed upon five priority areas and success measures for immediate action. These areas are:

- Quality, safe, evidence-based care.

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- Care coordination.
- Advocacy.
- Access.
- Education.

Strategies for achieving success were developed for each priority area and are profiled on the new Pediatric Nursing Invitational Forum Web site (www.pnif.org). These strategies and initiatives profile a creative and unique consensus plan for securing the future of children's health. Outcomes and next steps include the development and publication of the Pediatric Nursing Invitational Forum White Paper, which will also be profiled on the Pediatric Nursing Invitational Forum Web site along with video clips of the work of the Forum.

The Work Continues

An advisory group of Forum participants from pediatric education, credentialing, research, community/primary care, specialty pediatric care, and hospital care has been assembled to synthesize and prioritize the action plan, secure funding/sponsorship for plan implementation, and plan for the

inclusion of other stakeholders who share a desire to secure the best health care outcomes for children. All experts at the Forum expressed their commitment to continue participation in implementing the next steps and for activating the priority action plan. All participants and organizations represented at this historic Forum committed their support for future Forum meetings and pledged their cooperation for our shared vision and passion – a future of quality health care to children supported by a competent and expert pediatric nursing workforce.

We invite you to learn more about this historic event and to share your comments at www.pnif.org

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Editor's Note: *Pediatric Nursing* applauds the work of the PNCB Invitational Forum and look forward to the vision implemented in efforts to assure that all children are cared for by a competent and expert pediatric nursing workforce.

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