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Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Nursing Leadership from Bedside to Boardroom: Opinion Leaders' Perceptions

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Top Line Report

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Methodology Overview

The interviewing period for this survey was between August 18 and October 30, 2009.

The following survey is based on 1,504 telephone interviews with opinion leaders throughout the nation. Gallup selected opinion leaders based on key criteria and included the following groups. Gallup sent a letter in the mail to all potential participants in the study informing them that Gallup may be contacting them to participate in the study.

- University Faculty (n = 276)
- Insurance (n = 237)
- Corporate (n = 232)
- Health Services (n = 253)
- Government (n = 253)
- Industry Thought Leaders (n = 253)

For results based on a random sample of this size, at the 95% confidence level, one can say that the margin of sampling error for a percentage should not exceed 3 percentage points in either direction. In addition to sampling error, and the specified representation of different types of opinion leaders interviewed, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.

Objective

The objective of this study was to examine views of nursing and nursing leadership among the nation's opinion leaders. A recent survey, conducted November 20-22, 2009, found the American public rating nurses with the highest honesty and ethical standards, at 83%. Gallup has historically found nurses to be among the most ethical and honest professions, as rated by the public. This study sought to examine opinion leaders' views about nursing leadership with an emphasis on determining the role of nursing in the future, and potential barriers to leadership roles in healthcare today.

Executive Summary

Overall, opinion leaders rank healthcare cost and affordability (37%) as the top issue facing healthcare today. Cost and affordability is the top ranked issue in healthcare across all six opinion leader segments, but is highest by a significant margin for corporate executives.

How should leaders address these issues? Doctors (54%) and nurses (42%) are the information sources about health and healthcare in whom opinion leaders have a great deal of confidence. Yet opinion leaders do not consider doctors and nurses, those closest to patient and preventative care, as having a great deal of influence on health reform in the next 5-10 years. The opinion leaders view government (75%) and health insurance executives (56%) as the groups most likely to exert a great deal of influence on health reform, compared to only 37% for doctors and 14% for nurses.

Survey respondents may not view nurses as having a great deal of influence on health reform, but they are viewed as having a great deal of influence on key elements of a quality healthcare system. A majority of opinion leaders (51%) say nurses have a great deal of influence in reducing medical errors and improving patient safety, and 50% say nurses exert a great deal of influence on improving the quality of patient care. Only 18% say nurses exert a great deal of influence on increasing access to care, including primary care.

Respondents view nurses as a trusted source of information and as having a great deal of influence over key elements included in healthcare reform. But opinion leaders do not see nurses as having a great deal of influence on healthcare reform. Still, opinion leaders would like to see this change. Among nine areas of healthcare systems and services tested, the desire to see nursing influence increased ranged from 90% for reducing medical errors and improving patient safety to 72% for helping the healthcare system adapt to an increasingly ethnically, racially, and culturally diverse population.

The top barriers to nurses having more influence and exerting more leadership include perceptions of their role as key decision makers compared to physicians (69% of respondents say physicians are the key decision makers) and perceptions of their role as revenue generators (68% of respondents say doctors, not nurses, generate revenue). Conversely, only 31% identify the media's depiction of nursing as a barrier.

Opinion leaders offer two major suggestions for how nursing can overcome barriers and achieve more influence in key areas of healthcare. Foremost, nurses need to make their voices heard. Opinion leaders view nursing as lacking a single, unified voice to focus on key issues in health policy, and view many nurses as lacking interest in taking on this role. Second, opinion leaders feel society, and nurses themselves, should have higher expectations for what nurses can achieve, and that nurses should be held accountable for not only providing quality direct patient care, but also for healthcare leadership.

Additional findings relate to a nursing shortage posing as a specific barrier to achieving success. Overall, four out of five opinion leaders say there is a nursing shortage in the United States. University faculty members are significantly more likely to say there is a nursing shortage, while corporate executives are significantly less likely to see a shortage. Among those who say there is a shortage, 45% say the shortage is a very serious problem and 53% say it is somewhat serious.

A stressful/poor work environment (44% see as a very important reason), not enough openings for students in nursing schools (40%) and too many nurses leaving the profession (37%) are the most frequently cited reasons for the nursing shortage.

Topline Results

Q1

   In your opinion, what do you see as the number one issue facing healthcare today?
      (Open ended)*)*

	Total %
Cost/Affordability of healthcare	37
Access/Availability of healthcare	10
Cost control issues/Inflation	9
The uninsured	8
Government needs to stay out of healthcare	5
Cost of insurance premiums	5
Healthcare reform	4
Need government-run healthcare/Universal health coverage	4
Quality of healthcare	3
Tort reform/Lawsuits	2
Shortage of medical professionals	2
Funding for medical services	2
Insurance/Insurance companies	1
Cost of hospital stay/procedure	1
The underinsured	1
Other	7
None/Nothing	*
DK/RF	*

*Less than 0.5%

Q2　　　How much trust and confidence would you have in information about health and healthcare that you could get from each of the following sources — a great deal, a moderate amount, not much, or none at all? How about _____?

	Great deal %	Moderate amount %	Not much %	None at all %	DK/RF %
A doctor	54	38	7	1	1
A nurse	42	46	9	2	1
Books, including trade publications and journals	30	58	10	1	1
Internet	13	55	25	6	1
Television	3	36	49	12	1
Magazines	4	55	34	6	1
Newspapers	5	50	38	7	1

Q2_1

In your opinion, do you feel that there is a nursing shortage in America today, or not?

	Total %
Yes	81
No	13
DK/RF	6

Q3

How serious a problem do you feel the nursing shortage is in America? Would you say it is a very serious problem, somewhat serious, not very serious, or not at all serious? (Based on those who feel there is a shortage) (n=1,216)

	Total %
Very serious problem	45
Somewhat serious	53
Not very serious	2
Not at all serious/DK/RF	*

*Less than 0.5%

Q4

For each of the following, please tell me, in your opinion, if this is a very important reason there is a nursing shortage, a somewhat important reason, a not very important reason, or not a reason why there is a nursing shortage. How about _____?

	Very important %	Somewhat important %	Not Very important %	Not a reason %	DK/RF %
Poor pay or compensation	22	39	22	17	1
Lack of interest in nursing as a professions	16	42	22	19	1
Not enough openings for students in nursing schools	40	29	12	11	9
Too many nurses leaving the profession	37	39	11	7	6
Shortage of leadership opportunities	19	42	22	14	4
Unable to attract minorities	12	31	25	27	5
Seen as a profession for women	20	44	21	15	1
Stressful/Poor work environment	44	41	8	5	1

Q5

Thinking about the next 5-10 years, how much influence do you think each of the following professions or groups of people will have in health reform in the United States — a great deal, a moderate amount, not much, or none at all? How about _____?

	Great deal %	Moderate amount %	Not much %	None at all %	DK/ RF %
Doctors	37	52	10	1	*
Nurses	14	44	39	4	*
Healthcare executives	46	44	9	1	*
Insurance executives	56	33	8	2	*
Government	75	20	4	2	*
Pharmaceutical executives	46	38	13	2	*
Patients	20	37	35	8	*

*Less than 0.5%

Q6

Please think about the role of nurses in America today in planning, policy, and management of health systems and services. Do you feel that nurses CURRENTLY have a great deal of influence in each of the following ways, a moderate amount, not much, or none at all? How about _____?

	Great deal %	Moderate amount %	Not much %	None at all %	DK/RF %
Increasing access to care, including primary care	18	36	38	7	1
Increasing the quality of care	50	40	9	1	*
Reducing medical errors and improving patient safety	51	41	6	1	1
Improving healthcare efficiency and reducing costs	23	42	30	4	1
Promoting wellness and expanding preventive healthcare in the local community	38	45	15	2	1
Integrating new technologies, including electronic health records	24	43	28	4	1
Helping coordinate patients through the healthcare delivery system	40	43	15	2	1
Helping the healthcare system adapt to an aging population	30	48	19	2	1
Helping the healthcare system adapt to an increasingly ethnically, racially, and culturally diverse population	26	44	25	3	2

*Less than 0.5%

Q7

Would you like nurses to have more influence, about the same influence, or less influence than they do now in planning, developing policy, and the management of the following health systems and services? How about _____?

	More influence %	About the same influence %	Less influence %	DK/RF %
Increasing access to care, including primary care	74	23	1	1
Increasing the quality of care	89	10	1	1
Reducing medical errors and improving patient safety	90	9	*	1
Improving healthcare efficiency and reducing costs	84	14	1	1
Promoting wellness and expanding preventive healthcare in the local community	86	13	1	1
Integrating new technologies, including electronic health records	76	22	2	1
Helping coordinate patients through the healthcare delivery system	83	15	1	1
Helping the healthcare system adapt to an aging population	83	16	1	*
Helping the healthcare system adapt to an increasingly ethnically, racially, and culturally diverse population	72	26	2	1

*Less than 0.5%

8

Q9

What, if anything, do you think could be done to ensure that nurses take on more leadership responsibility in improving health status and delivering healthcare services in the United States today?

	Total %
Make their voices heard/Increased input	15
Higher expectations/accountability	12
Work on improving perception of nursing	10
Improved hospital management/administration	7
Improved pay/benefits/incentives	5
Improved access to continuing education/pursuing advanced degrees	5
Improve relationship with physicians/doctors	5
More leadership/business training	4
Improve nursing care/More time devoted to patient	4
Larger number of nurses	3
Improve the quality/curriculum of training/education	3
Increased opportunities for advancement/role change	3
Increased political presence/lobbying	3
Join nursing associations	2
Improved access to nursing school/training programs	2
Broader/More variety of training provided in nursing schools/training programs	2
Improved teamwork	1
Less government/political involvement	1
Other	5
Nothing	3
DK/RF	5

Q8

Please tell me if you think each of the following is a major barrier, a minor barrier, or not a barrier to nurses' ability to contribute to improvements in planning, policy development, and management of health systems and services. How about _____?

	Major barrier %	Minor barrier %	Not a barrier %	DK/RF %
Education compared to physicians	44	44	11	1
Nurses have different levels of education	42	45	12	1
The media's depiction of nurses in advertising, on television and film	31	44	23	2
The stereotypes of nursing compared to other health professions	41	43	15	1
Nursing lacks a single voice in speaking on national issues	56	29	11	5
Lack of opportunities for nurses to advance into leadership positions	51	33	12	4
Resources and attention are primarily focused on acute care, not on preventive care and health maintenance	62	29	7	2
Relatively poor compensation for nurses	35	44	19	2
Nurses are not perceived to be important healthcare decision-makers compared to physicians	69	22	8	1
Doctors, not nurses, are seen as revenue generators	68	23	8	2
Nurses are perceived as lacking long-term strategic vision	44	37	16	3

D1

At any time in your career, have you worked in the healthcare sector at a managerial or leadership level?

	Total %
Yes	39
No	57
DK/RF	4

D2

How long have you worked in the healthcare sector in a managerial or leadership level?

	Total %
Less than 5 years	10
5-10 years	20
11-15 years	11
16-20 years	19
21-25 years	12
26-30 years	13
More than 30 years	11
DK/RF	4

D3

Do you have experience working in healthcare delivery?

	Total %
Yes	67
No	32
DK/RF	1

D4

In which area did you work?

	Total %
Public health/prevention	16
Acute or chronic care	62
Other	21
DK/RF	1

D6
      GENDER:

	Total %
Male	70
Female	30