



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – February 4, 2010

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New Survey Finds Opinion Leaders View Nurses as Key Influencers For Quality Health Care

Study Emphasizes Importance of Health Care Providers other than MDs/DOs

WASHINGTON – Health care providers who are not doctors of medicine (MDs) or osteopathy (DOs) provide care to millions of patients in the U.S., but how valuable are they to the health care system? A new survey on nurses sheds some light.

Half of survey respondents viewed nurses as currently having a great deal of influence on key elements of a quality health care system, including reducing medical errors and improving patient safety and the vast majority of respondents felt that nurses should have greater influence in these areas than they do now. Respondents also believe nurses to be a highly trusted source of information.¹

The survey, titled “Nursing Leadership from Bedside to Boardroom: Opinion Leaders’ Perceptions,”² was conducted on behalf of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, examined the views of nursing and nursing leadership among the nation’s opinion leaders and found that nurses are relied upon as key information providers and are influencers of quality care.³ Over 1,500 opinion leaders throughout the nation were interviewed, including university faculty, government leaders and corporate executives from August 18 to October 30, 2009.

The survey demonstrates the value that nurses have within the health care system. When coupled with other studies of quality of care and costs, it is apparent that a broad spectrum of health care providers, other than MDs or DOs, are an important part of providing excellent care and reining in costs for the American people.

“The value of providers such as nurses within our health care system is profound,” said Maureen Shekleton, PhD, RN, FAAN, a spokesperson for the Coalition for Patients’ Rights™ (CPR). “We applaud the recognition of nurses as well as other health care professionals who ensure safe, effective and high-quality health care for patients.”

The study highlights the reality that, as the health care needs of Americans continue to expand, providers other than MDs or DOs are crucial for essential services. Despite this, authors found that recognition of this fact is low. Only 18 percent of respondents said nurses exert a great deal of influence on increasing access to care, including primary care. This highlights the need for opinion

¹ Gallup. Nursing Leadership from Bedside to Boardroom: Opinion Leaders’ Perceptions; January 20, 2010

² Nursing Leadership from Bedside to Boardroom: Opinion Leaders’ Perceptions <http://www.rwjf.org/pr/product.jsp?id=54492>

³ Gallup. Nursing Leadership from Bedside to Boardroom: Opinion Leaders’ Perceptions; January 20, 2010

leaders to acknowledge and validate the critical role nurses play in meeting the primary care needs of patients.

Access to the full array of health care providers will be increasingly important in ensuring patients can find the care that best suits their individual health care and wellness needs. These providers include advanced practice registered nurses, audiologists, acupuncturists, psychologists, naturopathic physicians and family, physical and occupational therapists.

Many of these professions arose as a result of patients' needs and gaps in health care services not filled by MDs or DOs. As shown by the Gallup survey, nurses have the skills and experience that make a positive and significant impact and they are essential contributors within the health care system.

About the Coalition for Patients' Rights™

A national coalition of more than 35 organizations, the Coalition for Patients' Rights represents more than three million licensed and certified health care professionals committed to ensuring comprehensive health care choices for all patients. It was formed in 2006 in response to divisive efforts by the Scope of Practice Partnership (SOPP), a coalition of medical and osteopathic physician organizations including the American Medical Association (AMA), which aims to limit the scopes of practice of other health care professionals.

The Coalition is comprised of a diverse array of health care professionals, including registered nurses, naturopathic doctors, psychologists, audiologists, physical and occupational therapists, advanced practice registered nurses (including certified registered nurse anesthetists, nurse practitioners, and clinical nurse specialists), optometrists and chiropractors.

For more information about the Coalition for Patients' Rights™, visit www.patientsrightscoalition.org.