

Preface and Acknowledgments

Over the past decade, a national concern over nursing shortages has created greater awareness of the nurse's role as a key linkage between medical expertise and patient welfare. National and state initiatives in support of nursing education have been launched, enrollments in many nursing schools have increased, and their impact on nurse supply is being evaluated. Shortages, however, continue to be of concern and the adequacy of future supply, particularly in view of the forthcoming health care needs of the "baby-boom" retirees, uncertain. Recently, more attention is being given to strategies aimed at keeping nurses at work beyond alleged early retirement plans. The success of these strategies depends on how nurses view their profession and how rewarding or frustrating they perceive their job experience to be.

Since the Center for Health Economics and Policy (CHEP), conducted, in 2000, the first comprehensive survey of Texas nurses' career plans, it seemed useful to ascertain if, two years later and after several programs for ending the shortage, nurses were feeling any different about themselves, their profession and the environment in which they work. To accomplish this objective, we conducted a follow up survey in 2002. Its findings and some comparisons with the previous study are reported here, first of the publications, planned for 2003, from data generated by the Nurse Workforce Data System (NWDS).

The NWDS was designed and implemented in 1999 by the Center for Health Economics and Policy (CHEP) in partnership with the Texas Nurses Association (TNA) and the Texas Hospital Association (THA) to remedy the lack of reliable and timely data on nursing. Later, the data system was transferred to and is now maintained by the Regional Center for Health Workforce Studies (RCHWS) created, in 2001 within CHEP, through a collaborative agreement between the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio and the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). RCHWS is one of five regional centers in the country operating under the umbrella of the National Center for Health Workforce Analysis of the HRSA Bureau of Health Professions. The mission of the RCHWS is to develop health workforce data and better tools of analysis for the south central United States (Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas) and address the unique health workforce issues of the regions on the border between the United States and Mexico.

We like to acknowledge the initial contribution of the Texas Nurses Association (TNA) and the Texas Hospital Association (THA) in providing the necessary support for starting the Nurse Workforce Data System and the TNA contributions to the maintenance of the nursing database during 2002. We are grateful to the Executive Director of the Texas Nurses Association, Clair Jordan, for her guidance and for

sharing her experience on issues and information priorities. Nancy Ackley, former director of the Texas Nurses Foundation, was a major force and a key catalyst in the initial implementation of the system. We continue to miss her dedication and competence. Elizabeth Sjoberg, Associate General Counsel of the Texas Hospital Association, has been providing encouragement and her experience as a nurse and attorney for THA since the earlier study. Most valuable contributions to every phase of the project were made by Dr. Peter Buerhaus, Senior Associate Dean for Research, Vanderbilt University School of Nursing, and consultant to the development of the Texas Nurse Workforce Data System since its inception. His experience and leadership in major national studies gave important perspective and technical assistance to the 2002 survey. The former Dean of the School of Nursing at The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, Dr. Janet Allan, gave personal and institutional support to the project throughout her tenure at the University. That support was continued and further enhanced by the current interim Dean, Dr. Colleen Keller, and the Chair of the Department of Acute Nursing Care, Dr. Nancy Girard. They made possible for Dr. Reineck and Dr. Lucke to participate in the study. A group of specialists in nursing education and employment reviewed an early draft of the survey questionnaire. They were: Jennifer Cook, M.S.N., R.N., Professor, University of the Incarnate Word; Melissa Griffith, R.N.; Clair B. Jordan, M.S.N., R.N., Executive Director, Texas Nurses Association; Kathleen M. Light, Ed.D., R.N., Dean, School of Nursing and Health Professions, University of the Incarnate Word; Jeff Pittman, B.S.N., R.N.; Elizabeth Sjoberg, R.N., J.D., Associate General Counsel, Texas Hospital Association, and Stephanie Tabone, M.S.N., R.N., Director of Practice, Texas Nurses Association. Also, we are grateful to Beth Ulrich, Ed.D., R.N., Editor of *Nurseweek*, who provided significant input into the survey's structure and format, and to Leah Curtin, R.N., M.S., Sc.D(h), F.A.A.N., Editor and Publisher, *Nursing's Journal of Clinical Systems Management*, who gave us expert advice on the section for nurse managers. Sample selection and data base management were the responsibility of Joseph Lucke, Ph.D., Statistical Scientist in the UTHSCSA School of Nursing and Robert Wood, M.P.H. Dr.P.H. (Candidate), Assistant Director for Research at RCHWS. Jorge Martinez and Kevin Kyrish assisted in many research and verification tasks. Administrative support, report production and word processing were accomplished by Janie Peña and Kevin Kyrish. Paula Chamberlain, R.N., Lieutenant Commander, Nurse Corps, U.S. Navy, assisted Dr. Reineck in qualitative data analysis, and a class of graduate nursing students pilot tested the survey for format, face validity and mailing procedures. We are grateful for their thoroughness and dedication to the task. They are: Janice Cavanaugh, R.N., Paula Chamberlain, R.N., Judy Flanagan, R.N., Jennifer Hatzfeld, R.N., Teresa Irvine, R.N., Angie Mann, R.N., Patty O'Donnell, R.N., Carolyn Otero, R.N., Kim Rayfield, R.N., Darryl Reid, R.N., Jack Smith, R.N., and Mark Vassallo, R.N.

Antonio Furino, Ph.D., Director
Regional Center for Health Workforce Studies at CHEP