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Elimination of barriers to RN scope of practice: Opportunities and challenges

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Statement of the Problem: The ability of frontline RNs to practice to the fullest extent of their education and training is imperative in promoting patient safety, increasing nurse satisfaction and improving access to care for all patients. These outcomes are achieved by optimizing the care delivery model at the frontline level. Empirically, we know the variables that must be present in the individual nurse, within the interdisciplinary team and within the organization to achieve this goal. The roadmap that is necessary to address these issues however, remains underdeveloped and not fully or widely embraced.

Conclusion & Significance: There are tangible steps that the nursing profession can take to support the ability of frontline RNs to practice to the fullest extent of their education and training. First, we must promote education progression and provide the support for all nurses to achieve a B.S. in Nursing. Second, we must from a regulatory perspective ensure that scope of practice is maximized and increase the use of protocols based on evidenced based practice principles to provide options for nurses to respond to patient needs. Third, RNs must be participants and leaders in interdisciplinary teams to drive innovative change. Fourth, RNs must have the skills to measure their contributions and demonstrate the value they bring to patient care. Lastly, RNs must have the leadership skills to work collaboratively as part of the interdisciplinary team. To implement these important steps, nursing practice, nursing academia and professional organizations must incorporate these five principles into their strategic initiatives and lay the foundation to achieve the future for nursing that is deserved, needed and will enhance the health of our communities.

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