

futureofnursing

NEW YORK STATE

An honored participant in the Future of Nursing™ Campaign for Action

Senator Charles Schumer
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

March 19, 2012

Dear Senator Schumer,

In late 2010, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) released a report titled *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health*. This Robert Wood Johnson Foundation initiative was the culmination of two years of study assessing the nursing profession. Based on extensive evidence and careful evaluation of the potential role of the profession in a reformed health care system, the report emphasized that reform should focus on the implementation of accessible, quality, cost effective care. One of the recommendations of the study was to remove scope of practice barriers that prevent nurses from working to the full extent of their education and training.

The Future of Nursing – NYS Action Coalition, a nonpartisan entity, was designated by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to take a state leadership role in implementing the recommendations of the report. A primary responsibility of the Action Coalition is to inform policymakers and decision makers on key health issues.

We wish to inform you about a particular barrier associated with registered nurse first assistant practice (RNFAs). The RNFA is an experienced operating room nurse who is qualified to practice as a first assistant at surgery by virtue of successful completion of an additional, beyond licensure, intense one year didactic and clinical college education program. The documented shortage of available surgeons and the mandated reduction in permitted work hours of surgical residents has contributed to the need for qualified registered nurses to step in to provide first assistant services.

However, the first assistant at surgery service provided by the RNFA is not recognized by Medicare as eligible for reimbursement. As a result, the RNFA is not likely to be utilized, and is unable to practice to the full extent of his/her education and training.

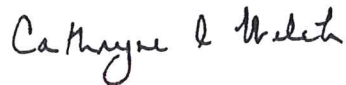
Resolution of this barrier to RNFA practice will result in increased opportunities for Medicare to provide reimbursement for first assistant services at the cost saving, non-physician rate and will contribute to ensuring the provision of a qualified assistant at surgical procedures.

The Future of Nursing - NYS Action Coalition wishes to advise you that recognition of and resolution of this barrier, via public policy action directed at establishing provisions to achieve Medicare reimbursement for RNFA services, is wholly consistent with the IOM Report Recommendations.

Sincerely,



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Co-Chair, Subcommittee on Scope of Practice



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