



November 5, 2012

To Whom It May Concern:

In 2011, the Institute of Medicine (“IOM”) released a report entitled “*The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health.*” The IOM acts under the responsibility given to the National Academy of Sciences by its congressional charter to be an adviser to the federal government and, upon its own initiative, to identify issues of medical care, research and education which need future transformation. The IOM “*Future of Nursing*” initiative was the culmination of two years of studying and assessing the nursing profession and was based on extensive evidence and careful evaluation of the profession and its potential role in a reformed healthcare 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 Texas Team Advancing Health through Nursing is a nonpartisan action coalition, designated by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to take leadership in Texas in implementing the recommendations of the IOM report. A primary responsibility of the Texas Team is to inform and educate policymakers and decision makers on key health issues.

We wish to inform you about a particular barrier associated with registered nurse first assistant (RNFA) practice. 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 have 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-Texas Team Action Coalition wishes to advise you that recognition 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alexia Green".

Alexia Green RN, PhD, FAAN
Co-Leader Executive Leadership Team