

## • BCBSM Foundation Highlights

# The Front Line: Michigan's Nurse Work Force

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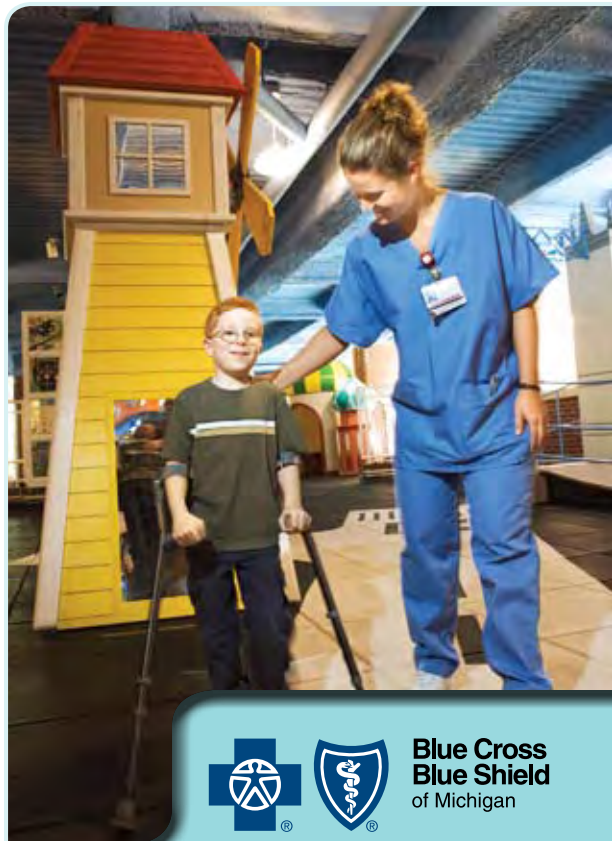
**Nurses are a special group of people.** They care for us when we're ill or injured, they teach us strategies to prevent disease, they help us achieve and maintain our optimal level of health and they provide emotional and palliative care when we are at the end of our lives. Throughout our history, the BCBSM Foundation has championed the nursing profession — supporting research designed and conducted by nurses, providing awards to nurses for excellence in research, implementing an initiative aimed at addressing the nursing shortage and partnering with nurses to extend their careers. •

### Background

According to a 2009 publication by Michigan's Center for Nursing, there are more than 150,000 licensed registered and practical nurses in our state. Of these nurses, 75 percent are working full- or part-time in nursing, with the vast majority of nurses providing direct care to patients.

To educate nurses, Michigan colleges and universities offer 25 practical nurse diploma programs, 32 associate's degree programs, 19 bachelor's degree programs, 13 master's of science in nursing programs, three doctoral programs and two doctor of nursing practice programs. Yet most schools state that many qualified applicants are not admitted to nursing programs because of a nursing faculty shortage.

Statistics about the nursing shortage are well documented. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services predicts that there will be close to a 2 percent annual increase in the demand for registered nurses, resulting in a 29 percent shortage of nurses within 10 years. In a 2008 Michigan Center of Nursing survey, 39 percent of registered nurses reported they plan to stop practicing within the next 10 years. Given current graduation rates, there will be a shortage of approximately 5,296 registered nurses in Michigan by 2018. •



## Increasing the number of nurses

In 2003, the BCBSM Foundation issued a request for proposals seeking responses to Michigan's nursing shortage. We funded two important grants under this initiative. Madonna University was funded for a project where the university partnered with three Southeast Michigan high schools to provide academic support, college entry skills and socialization into the nursing profession. We also supported Michigan State University's College of Nursing to design, implement and evaluate an R.N. refresher program that included a Web-based theory component and a community-based precepted clinical practicum aimed at the estimated 13,000 Michigan R.N.s who were not practicing. Evaluation results indicated that both participants and employers were extremely satisfied with the ability of the R.N. refresher program to facilitate trained nurses' re-entry into the work force. Notably, the program has continued and is self-sustaining. •

## Retaining nurses in clinical practice

A related issue is retaining nurses in the work force. The nursing work force is aging in Michigan and across the country. Moreover, nursing in acute care hospitals is physically demanding, requiring prolonged standing and heavy lifting. This becomes increasingly challenging for older nurses. One strategy to address this issue is to

enable experienced nurses to remain in the work force by transitioning them from acute care settings to direct patient care roles in non-acute care settings.

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Based on the success of the R.N. refresher project, the BCBSM Foundation and Teresa Wehrwein, Ph.D., R.N., and Katie Kessler, M.S.N., R.N., both on the faculty at MSU's College of Nursing, applied for and were awarded a Partnership in Nursing grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Northwest Health Foundation. The purpose of our project was to induce older nurses to continue working or return to the work force by creating educational programs that help them transition to non-acute settings. Evaluation of the project confirmed that the knowledge and skills taught to nurse participants were effective in providing the confidence and knowledge needed for newly transitioned nurses to succeed in their new jobs. Results of this project were presented by BCBSM Foundation staff at the National Conference for 2007 Nursing Workforce. Additionally, the BCBSM Foundation and our partners at MSU were proud to be awarded a 2009 Building Michigan Workforce Award from the Michigan Health Council. •

## Addressing work force issues

In their publication, 2008 Employee and Nurse Check-Up Report: Employee and Nurse Perspectives on American Health Care Organizations, Press Ganey® surveyed health care employees and found that registered nurses were the least satisfied employees. Job dissatisfaction for nurses has been related to inadequate staffing, heavy workloads, increased overtime, inadequacy of wages and lack of support.

When working in a hospital, the environment surrounding a nurse is chaotic, fast-paced and unpredictable. Staff nurse interruptions and multitasking appear to be increasing. We have funded Beatrice Kalisch, Ph.D., R.N., of the University of Michigan School of Nursing to determine the number and nature of interruptions and multitasking experienced by staff and charge nurses and its impact on patient safety. Currently, Dr. Kalisch is working on a second project for us looking at missed nursing care. When nursing care demands are greater than available resources, the nurse makes choices, filtered by internal processes, to determine what care should be provided. This project is examining the link between missed nursing care and variations in nurse staffing level. Results of this study are due in early 2010.



Linda Scott, Ph.D., R.N., NEA-BC, FAAN, professor and associate dean for Graduate Programs, Kirkhof College of Nursing, Grand Valley State University, has conducted numerous studies on nurse fatigue. We funded her evaluation of a Fatigue Countermeasures Program for Nurses to reduce fatigue associated with extended shifts in nursing. Her countermeasure program was found to be effective and results have been accepted for publication in an upcoming issue of Journal of the Nursing Administration.

Verbal miscommunication between nurses and physicians has been found to be responsible for 37 percent of all errors in the intensive care unit. Milisa Manojlovich, Ph.D., R.N., of the U of M School of Nursing, was funded to examine specific elements of nurse-to-physician communication from the perspective of ICU nurses and to assess those elements that contribute to selected outcomes deemed sensitive to nursing care. She found that medication errors decreased when nurses and physicians communicate better.

We have also fostered the development of Michigan's nursing profession by convening nurse leaders who will plan for the effective use of the nurse work force. Together with the Chief Nurse Executive of Michigan, we have convened two Nurse Leader Forums to discuss issues that face the profession in Michigan and to encourage collaborative action to improve the nurse shortage. These leader forums have been well attended, and nurse leaders from a wide array of organizations that educate and employ nurses have enthusiastically welcomed the opportunity for dialogue with representatives of the entire nursing spectrum in Michigan. ●

## Supporting clinical nursing

In addition, the BCBSM Foundation has funded clinical projects designed and implemented by nurses in their role as a clinical caregiver. Carla Groh, Ph.D., R.N., of the University of Detroit has worked with a team of nurse researchers who designed and developed an intervention at the McAuley Health Center and Mercy Primary Care Center in Detroit to provide a health lifestyle change program for obese African-American women and to evaluate its long-term effectiveness. We have also funded



a Nurse Managed Care Center in Ann Arbor serving uninsured and underinsured women to implement a model of group prenatal care called Centering, which was developed at the Yale New Haven School of Nursing. Carmen Eribes, Ph.D., R.N., of GVSU was funded to implement and assess a program to help African-Americans with type 2 diabetes living in Muskegon improve health outcomes using a chronic disease self-management program. ●

## Awarding nurse and nursing student research

The Frank J. McDevitt Award for Excellence in Research is an annual award given by the BCBSM Foundation to Michigan researchers in recognition of excellence that contributes to improving health and medical care in Michigan. Over this program's 14 year life span, 12 nurses have received this prestigious award. The Foundation also supports doctoral students for dissertation research. We are pleased that 45 doctoral students in nursing have received Student Award Program support. ●

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**Reflecting on the complexity of the nursing profession, we have offered support for a variety of nurse research and demonstration projects. We are proud of the depth of our commitment and believe Michigan's nurses are a key factor in efforts to improve the quality of care and the health of Michigan residents.**

*This is the fourth issue of BCBSM Foundation Highlights, a publication of the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan Foundation. Since its establishment in 1980, the BCBSM Foundation has been dedicated to improving the health of Michigan residents through the support of research and innovative community health programs.*



# Spotlight

## Peter B. Ajluni, D.O., treasurer, BCBSM Foundation

Dr. Peter Ajluni is a board certified osteopathic physician and a senior orthopedic surgeon at Mount Clemens Regional Medical Center. He is currently on its board of trustees. He specializes in general orthopedics and has a special interest in upper-extremity problems. Previously, he was chief of staff at Mount Clemens Regional Medical Center.

Dr. Ajluni was president of the American Osteopathic Association in 2006. He has also served as president of the Michigan Osteopathic Association, as well as president of the Michigan Osteopathic Association of Orthopedic Surgery.

He completed his undergraduate work at the University of Detroit and earned his osteopathic medical degree at Midwestern University in Chicago, Illinois. He then completed his internship and residency in orthopedic surgery at Mount Clemens Regional Medical Center. He also completed a fellowship in hand surgery at Grace Hospital in Detroit. Dr. Ajluni was born and raised in Detroit, and he and his family still reside in the area. He is an avid hiker and jogger and has participated in a number of marathons and triathlons.

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