

Comments submitted by the Hospice and Palliative Nurses Association to the Institute of Medicine (IOM) Committee on Transforming Care at the End of Life

The Hospice and Palliative Nurses Association (HPNA) is a national non-profit, professional nursing organization, which has approximately 11,000 members and over 50 chapters across the nation. The membership consists primarily of hospice and palliative nurses but also includes other members of the interdisciplinary team, such as social workers, chaplains, and nursing assistants. HPNA's mission is "To lead the way to promote excellence in the provision of palliative nursing care through leadership development, education, and the support of research in the field." Established in 1986, HPNA is the only nursing organization of its kind. HPNA is part of the Alliance for Excellence in Hospice and Palliative Nursing, which also includes the Hospice and Palliative Nurses Foundation and the National Board for Certification of Hospice and Palliative Nurses.

HPNA appreciates the previous work done by the IOM regarding Palliative and End of Life Care and we look forward to the work of this new committee. HPNA also acknowledges the work of the IOM's report *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health*. We are pleased to see the inclusion of two nursing experts on the Committee.

As to the work of this Committee, HPNA views the following issues as priorities:

- Patient access to the most appropriate and effective medications for pain and symptom management. Patient care and treatment should be based on individual needs.
- Policy makers should utilize a balanced approach to prevent misuse of pain medications, while preserving access for patients who need them.
- Assuring choice for seriously and progressively ill patients is necessary. These patients and their families should receive appropriate information and counseling concerning palliative and end-of-life options for care and treatment. Systems should be in place to support this essential process.
- Care must be patient-centered and include the expertise of all members of the interdisciplinary team.
- Nurses play a vital role in the delivery of healthcare in our nation. Hospice and palliative nurses have expertise in pain and symptom management, communication skills, and coordination of care.
- Advanced practice registered nurses represent a valuable resource in national efforts to improve care and quality of life for all Americans and their families living with serious or life-threatening illnesses and conditions. As per the recommendations from the Future of Nursing report:
- Nurses should be able to practice to the full extent of their training and education.
- Nurses should also be full partners, with physicians and other health professionals, in redesigning health care in the United States.

Thank-you for your consideration of these issues.

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