



Focus on the Future

Guest Predictions: Charlene Connolly

Guest Predictions is a regular feature in which we ask leaders in a number of professions questions that affect us all.

Charlene Connolly, Ed.D, RN is the Executive Vice-President of the International University of Nursing with administrative offices in New York and campus in St. Kitts, West Indies. www.iuon.org. She was formerly the Provost of the Medical Education Campus at Northern Virginia Community College, Director of Member Health Education for Kaiser Permanente, Southern California and engaged in nursing education for several years. Dr. Connolly is an alumni of the Robert Wood Johnson Executive Nurse Fellows Program.

Q: What changes in your professional environment in the past 3-5 years have you found to be the most beneficial?

A: The recognition of the nursing shortage of both practitioners and faculty has created a "tipping-point catalyst" that has created a more forward "out of the box" thinking by agencies, governments and other organizations that in the past had very traditional viewpoints

Q: What changes have been the most troubling to you?

A: I think it is more "lack of changes" or the "unwillingness to change" that is most troublesome. Trying to challenge beliefs and processes that are "tried and true" that did work in the past, but you see just are not effective any more.

Q: What significant challenges might be anticipated in your professional area in the next few years?

A: Within health care delivery, the U.S. has always been "the preferred destination for practice" for many international nurses and has lured nurses from their home countries with significantly higher salary. I believe that as other world powers gather strength and as their economies grow and health care delivery systems change, the emigration of nurses will increase to other countries as well causing severe shortages globally.

Q: What significant challenges might be anticipated in your professional area in the next few years?

A: The ongoing debate concerning the level of nursing education for entry to practice at the baccalaureate level is gaining strength based on evidence-based research. Many states (and countries) are now requiring nurses to hold bachelor's degrees in nursing to enter the profession and either eliminating or changing the associate degree level nurse. This comes at a time of the

most severe nursing shortage accompanied by the "bolus" of baby boomers that need services.

Q: What are the greatest challenges confronting young professionals in Western culture today?

A: Expectations of leadership at much earlier stages in a career and the need to be appropriately educated to carry out those responsibilities--the need for higher education to ensure that the degree programs they offer are responsive to the needs of "today's" young professionals. The lack of continuity and dedication in a workplace as a result of more transitory positions and frequent job change.