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Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Nurse Leaders in the Boardroom

Matching Nurse Leaders with Boards

Nurse Leaders in the Boardroom is working with a nationally recognized executive search firm to identify outstanding, effective nurse leaders. If your organization is interested in learning more about nurse leaders who might be a good fit for your board, please contact:

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The *Nurse Leaders in the Boardroom* project is part of a broader Robert Wood Johnson Foundation initiative to assure that the nation has a diverse, well-trained leadership and workforce in health and health care to meet the needs of all Americans.



“Nurses have skills that are critical to the success of any management team. We know this first-hand because AARP’s board chair and president-elect are both nurses.”

—Bill Novelli, CEO, AARP

What do these leaders have in common?*

Carolyn Hope Smeltzer

Partner, PricewaterhouseCoopers
Chicago, Ill.

Tara Cortes

President and CEO, Lighthouse International for the Blind
New York, N.Y.

Joanne Disch

Chair, AARP Board of Directors
Washington, D.C.

Shirley Chater

President Emeritus, Texas Woman’s University
and Former Commissioner, United States Social Security Administration

Carol Garrison

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Gregory A. Adams

Assistant Regional President and COO,
Kaiser Permanente
Oakland, Calif.

Mary Wakefield

Chair, Catholic Health Initiatives Board of Trustees
Denver, Colo.

Nurses are best known for their role in providing comfort and care to patients and information to families and loved ones. Those skills are the foundation of the profession, but modern nursing also demands and develops competency in communications, management and leadership—skills that are as valuable in a boardroom as at bedside.

That’s why so many nurses become leaders in health and other fields, overseeing major corporations, universities and non-profit organizations.

With their leadership abilities, experience and knowledge, nurses are a natural asset to boards of directors of the nation’s leading health care and quality organizations. Yet frequently, they are not represented.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has created *Nurse Leaders in the Boardroom* to facilitate relationships between health care organizations and nurses, and to train future nurse leaders. The Foundation believes that placing nurses on health care organization boards—where their insight and skill can shape policy—will ultimately improve the quality of health care in this country.



What Nurses Bring to the Boardroom

Never before has so much attention been focused on quality of care and patient safety. Organizations committed to these objectives carefully choose board members who can provide leadership, contribute to advancing the organization’s goals, offer fiscal and managerial guidance and enhance the organization’s reputation. In the boardroom, nurses provide:

- Connection between organizations setting policy for quality and safety and the patients they treat
- Credibility with policymakers, employers, health plans, physicians, and health care executives
- Public trust, as the top-ranked profession for the last eight years in a Gallup poll of honesty and ethics

Most importantly, an increasing number of today’s nurses have business skills that boards seek, such as backgrounds in finance, management, fundraising and information technology. Nurses in the boardroom also provide:

- Assessment skills to tackle and triage problems
- Demonstrated ability to translate evidence-based quality improvements into practical governance policies
- Awareness of effective employee retention strategies
- Insight into the views and concerns of patients and their families

*All of them are nurses.