Preface and Acknowledgments

Over the past decade, a national concern over nursing shortages has created greater awareness of the nurse’s role as a key linkage between medical expertise and patient welfare. National and state initiatives in support of nursing education have been launched, enrollments in many nursing schools have increased, and their impact on nurse supply is being evaluated. Shortages, however, continue to be of concern and the adequacy of future supply, particularly in view of the forthcoming health care needs of the “baby-boom” retirees, uncertain. Recently, more attention is being given to strategies aimed at keeping nurses at work beyond alleged early retirement plans. The success of these strategies depends on how nurses view their profession and how rewarding or frustrating they perceive their job experience to be.

Since the Center for Health Economics and Policy (CHEP), conducted, in 2000, the first comprehensive survey of Texas nurses’ career plans, it seemed useful to ascertain if, two years later and after several programs for ending the shortage, nurses were feeling any different about themselves, their profession and the environment in which they work. To accomplish this objective, we conducted a follow up survey in 2002. Its findings and some comparisons with the previous study are reported here, first of the publications, planned for 2003, from data generated by the Nurse Workforce Data System (NWDS).

The NWDS was designed and implemented in 1999 by the Center for Health Economics and Policy (CHEP) in partnership with the Texas Nurses Association (TNA) and the Texas Hospital Association (THA) to remedy the lack of reliable and timely data on nursing. Later, the data system was transferred to and is now maintained by the Regional Center for Health Workforce Studies (RCHWS) created, in 2001 within CHEP, through a collaborative agreement between the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio and the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). RCHWS is one of five regional centers in the country operating under the umbrella of the National Center for Health Workforce Analysis of the HRSA Bureau of Health Professions. The mission of the RCHWS is to develop health workforce data and better tools of analysis for the south central United States (Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas) and address the unique health workforce issues of the regions on the border between the United States and Mexico.

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