

Preparing the Healthcare Workforce for the 21st Century

This article summarizes topics addressed at *Creating the Healthcare Workforce for the 21st Century Conference*; a collaborative educational program organized by Thomas Jefferson University and University of Delaware, and held on the Jefferson campus in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on October 21, 2011.

Thomas Jefferson University President Robert L. Barchi, MD, PhD, and University of Delaware President Patrick T. Harker, PhD, began the day-long program by sharing their vision for a partnership that enhances the health and science offerings in the region. The Delaware Health Sciences Alliance was formed to align resources to create a unique, broad-based collaboration among experts in medical practice, health economics and policy, population sciences, public health, and biomedical sciences and engineering and strengthen these offerings in the region.

A key component of developing the health sciences in the region is in educating and training a prepared workforce. Through the October 21 conference, over 200 professionals gathered to discuss ongoing change in the delivery of healthcare and how it relates to the workforce.

Susan Dentzer, Editor-in-Chief of *Health Affairs*, spoke on the benefits of cultivating collaborative and coordinated care and the great responsibility vested in academic medical centers, such as TJU, to train tomorrow's medical professionals to work

collaboratively as a team, and the importance of reducing waste and medical error to cut costs and improve medical outcomes.

Joanne Conroy, MD, Chief Health Care Officer of the Association of American Medical Colleges, addressed the need for transformational change in the education of health care professionals, calling for "the right mix of physicians and essential health care providers with the right skills and training, in the right places."

Former Pennsylvania Governor Edward G. Rendell gave the luncheon keynote and expressed his concern over America's loss of a competitive edge in science and technology; the need for the education of America's youth to once again take center stage, and a call to return to the "can do" attitude that once made America the world leader in innovation, discovery, and scientific breakthrough. He spoke of the importance of the healthcare industry to the Greater Philadelphia region, and how conferences such as this one underlie how Philadelphia can serve as the point for an era of drastically improved healthcare in terms of quality, safety, innovation, and job creation.

The afternoon included two diverse panel discussions. In one discussion, George W. Bo-Linn, MD, Chief Program Officer for the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation's San Francisco Bay Area Program, underlined the importance of teamwork in healthcare, and how critical it is for

health care professionals to engage their patients – or "persons," as Dr. Bo-Linn prefers – in their own health care. "The current most widely unrecognized and largest workforce is patients and their families," Dr. Bo-Linn declared.

In the final session Mike Strazzella spoke from the vantage point of the hospital, reminding the group that hospitals offer the community both fiscal and physical well being. He also encouraged the audience to reach out to the local representatives and educate them on the many benefits hospitals provide to the community, including a large number of jobs and a positive economic impact.

The health care workforce for the 21st century will need to adapt to a health care system currently in reform, but the most basic tenet remains the same, surmised David B. Nash, MD, MBA, Dean of the Jefferson School of Population Health - "Patients, or persons, will remain at the center of all we do." ■

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To listen to the podcast and view slides for this program visit: <http://jdc.jefferson.edu/creatinghealthworkforce/2011/>